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LEISURE HOUR SERIES

LOLA

A TALE OF GIBRALTAR

BY

ARTHUR GRIFFITHS



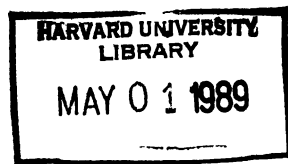
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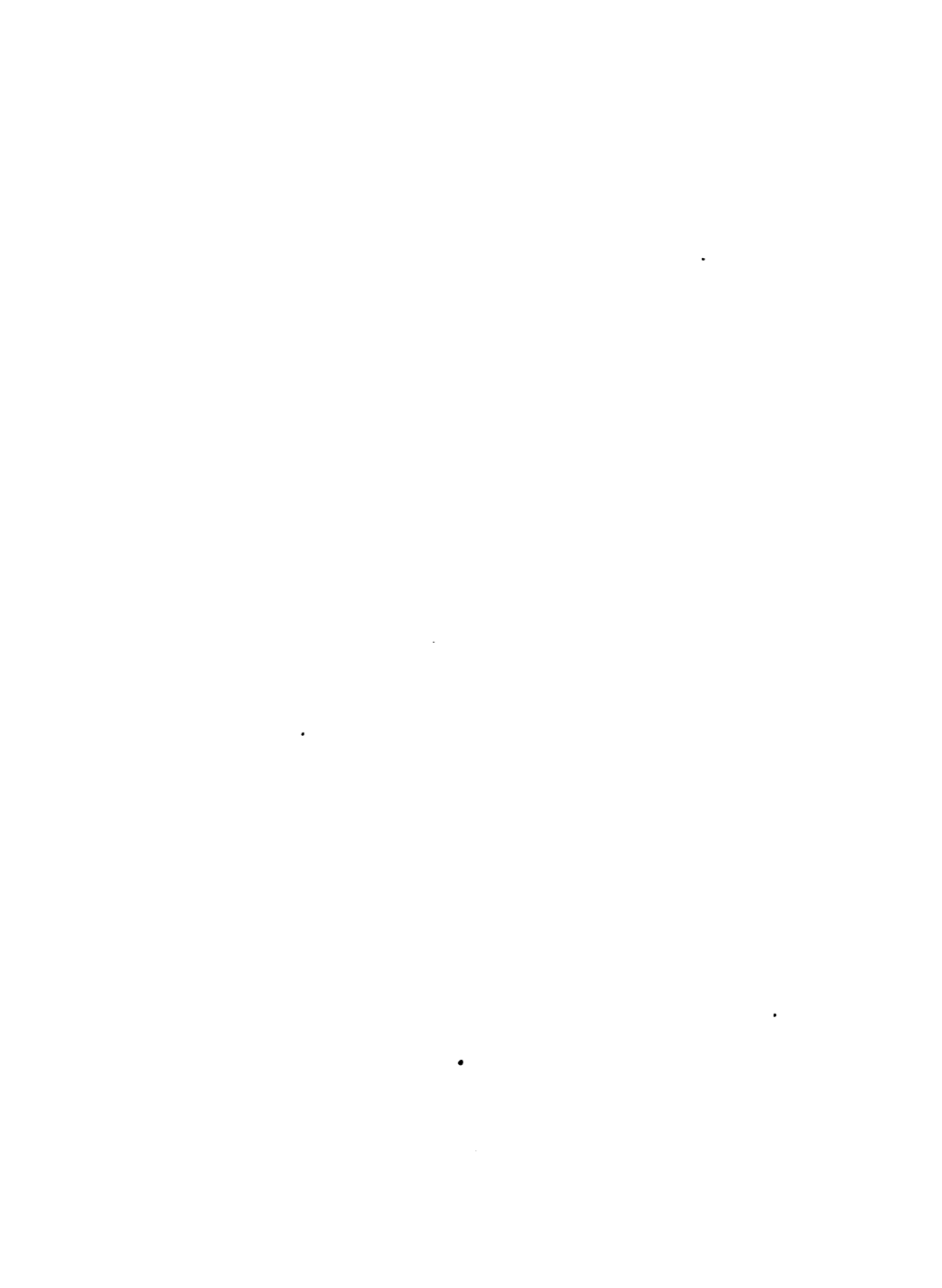
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TO
ALL OLD FRIENDS AND COMRADES
OF THE
HAPPY DAYS SPENT UPON THE
ROCK OF GIBRALTAR
I INSCRIBE THIS BOOK



CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE.
I. DISEMBARKING	I
II. DON MARIANO AT HOME	9
III. SAN ROQUE FAIR	16
IV. WHAT CAME OF THE FAIR	26
V. THE SPROULES	35
VI. "SWEETWATER FARM"	43
VII. UNDER MARTIAL LAW	51
VIII. MAD TO TRAVEL	59
IX. A SPANISH VAGABOND	66
X. SPANISH COURTSHIP	79
XI. THE BAT	90
XII. SAVE ME FROM MY FRIENDS	98
XIII. THE LOVERS MEET AND PART	108
XIV. A DARK HORSE	120
XV. THE BARB MAIDEN	131
XVI. NORTHWARD HO!	142
XVII. LOST IN LONDON	154
XVIII. FAIRFAX MANOR	162
XIX. HOSTILITIES	171
XX. AN ARMISTICE	180
XXI. THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES	190
XXII. THE BLESSINGS OF PEACE	198

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE.
XXIII. PEPE IN TROUBLE	206
XXIV. TOUJOURS PACO	214
XXV. MUST I REALLY GO?	224
XXVI. BACK AT ROSIA	235
XXVII. WHO SPEAKS TO ME OF "MUST?"	243
XXVIII. SOME OLD FRIENDS FALL OUT	254
XXIX. BY RIGHT OF CAPTURE	264
XXX. A CLEAN PAIR OF HEELS	272
XXXI. LOLA'S DILEMMA	283
XXXII. IN FULL FLIGHT	293
XXXIII. VIATICUM	303
XXXIV. WRONGS SET RIGHT	312
XXXV. FRANK MISSING	321
XXXVI. IN DURANCE	330
XXXVII. FOUND	339
XXXVIII. AT GRIMSWYCH	350

LOLA :

A TALE OF THE ROCK.

CHAPTER I.

DISEMBARKING.

IT was the fierce month of July, and the Rock of Gibraltar, crouching low, lay like a lazy lion asleep in the dog-day heat cooling its heated flanks in the waters that lap its base. This Rock—Tarik's Rock—it owns a dozen names—Calpe to the ancients, or right-hand pillar of Hercules; "Gib" to the subalterns and soldiers, who hate its "sentry-go;" to Jack Tar, "the mighty big stone;" to the "scorpions," as the English call the natives born and bred upon the narrow strip of habitable land that has accumulated at its base, it is *La Plaza*—the fortress, the strongest place in the world. Beyond its barrier gates, the Spaniards, its former possessors, yearning to own it once more, christen it *El cuerpo*, "the corpse," for there, in the paling light of evening, it floats for all the world like the body of a dead man with head thrown back after the last throes, with one knee bent, the other straight out, stark and cold.

It knows as many moods as it has names. The silent hills across the bay, and the summits, vermilion tinged, of the Bermeja Sierra, have stood and watched it all these years, and could tell endless tales of its changing glories. How at times it might be a huge toy, a Noah's ark set in a sea of mother-of-pearl; how when the east wind comes with its mists and vapors, drawn from all the long sweep of Mediterranean waters, the summit is half extinguished by a night-cap of dark dense cloud;

how, when the smoke of its hundreds of cannon curls in fantastic wreaths around its sides, it raises its head, thus proudly garlanded, like an ancient warrior on the day of his triumph.

When our story opens, its harsh outlines might be of bronze, or a smoldering cinder slag half consumed in the blazing heat. The sun has worked like an opiate to lock up every eye. The semi-Spanish natives doze through their midday siesta; the dogs forget to bark; that flag, which has so often braved the battle and the breeze, droops with almost cowardly indolence against its staff; the very sentries beneath their awnings survey the piled-up shot, the heavy guns, and the powder-houses committed to their charge with a benevolent haziness of vision, which will degenerate ere long into an unmistakable snore, unless roused by the rounds, or the Argus-eyed town-major.

But there is one man quite wide awake. Bombardier Brigstock, as he sweeps the Straits with his glass from the upper signal-station, is very much awake. Here at this high level he catches a sniff of air from the Mediterranean, and his occupation is not the severest toil. His telescope is on a rest, with the swivel well greased; his pipe is alight and drawing well; hard by in the signal-house a cool brew of shandy-gaff awaits his nod. He is an important person upon the Rock. It is he who settles the time, who, Joshua-like, controls the sun, firing from his stand-point in the clouds the signal-guns that open and close the fortress gates. He is learned, too, in shipping; knows every rig and build; can swear, when miles away, to the "Mail," whether homeward or outward bound; can tell at a glance the swift *saluchas* that bring the muscatels from Malaga from the stealthy smuggling craft with their long sweeps and lateen sails, and laden with mysterious cargoes styled "sundries" in the Shipping Gazette of the place. Ships of war, foreign or imperial, yachts, traders, he knew them all, and for all had the appropriate signal ready at hand. One only he had never run up the halyards; but hoped to signal some day before he died—"An enemy's fleet in sight." The flags were there; would they ever be used? Perhaps he felt that up where he was, on the top of the Rock, was the safest spot in a bombardment: he was a gunner himself, and knew that nothing short of sky-rockets could touch him.

"That's her!" he says, suddenly, to Bill Jakers, his assistant, who runs the bunting, the bulgy black balls of canvas, and the pendants up, and fires the warning guns. "That's her!" he repeats, shutting up his telescope with a "click." "Run up a blue burgee on the lower yard. A gallus long time she's been a-doing of it. But what can you expect from a 'trooper?' Troop-ship 'Upnor Castle'; Royal Halberdiers aboard. I see them swarming about the deck like little red ants."

And now all at once the town below is startled into life. By degrees a crowd of people are on the move. First appears one orderly, then another; a staff officer trots sharply out to "the South;" next come commissariat wagons drawn by mules; fatigue-parties of soldiers in white jackets; ladies, English and native, some in bonnets, some in mantillas, all with fans and sun-shades; and, last of all, a motley throng of hotel-touts, Jew dealers, enterprising shop-keepers, striving to be first in the race for the favor of these patrons newly arrived. Theirs is a common destination—the New Mole Gate.

While the crowd increases, and all with honeyed accents seek to win their way past the officer of the guard to the Mole below, the "Upnor Castle" glides slowly onward to its moorings. The sea is calm, the landscape quiet; across the bay runs a jagged line of purple mountain-tops, distant hills, hills nearer at hand, then gentle slopes, ending in sandy flats around the white town of Algeciras lying upon the water's edge. The surface of the water is smooth and burnished, a very mirror, reflecting details the most minute—the beacon with its egg-shaped top at the end of the Mole; the masts of the advancing ship, and round them a maze of intricate entanglement of rope, cable and block; even the passing shadows of the sea-birds as they flit by in rapid flight, skimming the surface in search of prey beneath.

On board the troop-ship there was far less excitement than on shore. Some of the soldiers in the forepart lounged lazily over the side, staring at the big brown Rock, trying to count the sentries whose bayonets now and again glistened in the sunlight; others gathered round Jack Hanlon, who had "put in his time" with the "Secondy Queen's" years back at Gibraltar, and had learned by heart where the grog-shops lay and the price of liquor. Grog and the number of nights in bed—off guard, that is to say—are first among a soldier's thoughts on reaching a new garrison. The Halberdiers were mostly in their shirt-sleeves, smoking. No orders had been given yet for disembarkation, though every one was ready. The white belts, reeking of new pipe-clay, festooned all the rigging around, bearing thick as fruit great black pouches, bright buttons, and brass-work. The squad-bags were filled, the great-coats folded and strapped upon the packs. Five minutes after the bugle-call every man could fall in, in full war-paint, ready to march on shore.

Aft upon the poop a group of officers discussed with more animation the Rock that was to be their home for the next few years. Among them were one or two officers' wives, all listening to old Honeybun, the paymaster, who gave himself out as an authority upon the new station.

"Mr. Company Manners," they called Honeybun in the regi-

ment, because he always minced his words and tried to talk fine. It was odd to hear the *K's* go astray like unbroken colts, in spite of his efforts to harness and drive them in neatly-turned speech. But there was nothing beyond Honeybun when he was in a select society that believed in him; no accomplishment he had not mastered, no branch of his education that had been neglected; yet he made the strangest hash of Latin quotations, and his French was the subalterns' joy on a dull afternoon. He had really risen from the ranks; he could not deny that. But great men had sometimes risen from even lower beginnings; and Honeybun, by talking vaguely of his birth and parentage, and the affluence in which he had been cradled, gave the public to understand that he could dazzle them not a little by drawing back the veil that hid the mysterious past. The haziness of these distant, undefined reminiscences were, in artistic phrase, suggestive: details might be filled in according to the imaginative powers. Old Gotham, the pioneer-corporal, was Honeybun's *belle noir*: they had been drummers together, but one had far outstripped the other, and the less fortunate detracted when he dared from his professional superior's merits, swearing, in strict privacy at the canteen, that Honeybun had learned all he knew of manners and gentility when body-servant to Mr. George Fairfax in another regiment. Nor did Honeybun deny that he had soldiered years before elsewhere than in the ranks of the Halbardiers. He was fond of talking of his old "cawr;" using the word *corps* because "regiment" sounded to him more meagre in meaning. He was full of tales of the days when "my cawr" lay at Belgaum and Bellary and Moulmein, although, to listen to him, he might have been its colonel instead of a simple private in its ranks.

This is how he spoke of Gibraltar.

"I mind it well—gay and glorious. Them's the words, boys. Sherry white wine—Manzanilyer they calls it—in every tap, and poor Os by the score."

"Poor Os?" asked some one, laughing.

"That's Spanish Casteylarno for cigars. For all your learning and schooling, it seems you can't speak every language, young squire."

"Cigars and cognac—that's your idea of life isn't it, Company?"

"Beer and pipes, I should say," added another voice.

"*You've* hardly left off milk," retorted Honeybun in high dudgeon.

"Don't get angry, Company," said young Wriottesley. "Tell us more of the Rock. What else is there besides wine and tobacco?"

"There's bull-fights, *corriders*, and fruit, and masked balls, and red mullet, and beauties in black silk—"

"All on the Rock?"

"There, and somewheres else. In the towns round—Malaga, Cadiz, Sevillyer la Belliya, Ronder—"

"That's short for *rendezvous*, I suppose?"

"Most likely," replied Honeybun, innocently. "It's where you go for the fair."

"Do you walk?"

"Walk!" with the utmost contempt. "No; ride. You get on your mule, and you trot across the Sairey."

"Sahara, you mean—that's on the other side, in Africa."

"I don't mean the other side, Mr. Cockeywax. I know what I'm talking about. I said See—airey. That's Casteylarno for mountains."

"And did you go often?" asked Mrs. Sproule, a neat, fair-haired woman, who was leaning back in a cane-bottomed chair.

"I was always a-going. My mast—" Honeybun checked himself suddenly.

"Your what, Mr. Honeybun? Mast—?" went on Mrs. Sproule, quickly, with malicious interest.

But further conversation was at this moment checked by a sudden uproar at the Mole. Frantic cries of "Stop him!" "Stop him!" "Throw him overboard!" rose in many accents from many tongues, while many hands were pointing threateningly to a man who was climbing the side of the "Upnor Castle."

The intruder, to whom attention was thus called by others envious of his enterprise and good fortune, was nothing daunted by the shouting, and laboring upward, gained the deck only to find himself in the arms of the sentry at the gangway. Here he met with rather a rough reception.

"Now, Johnny, what you want?" shouted the soldier. People of small education, speaking to a foreigner, fancy they must use a broken language or bellow; as if ignorance of tongues was to be surmounted like deafness or by baby-talk.

"What you want? No comee here—no permittee."

But the new-comer would not understand, and made as though he would push past.

"No one is allowed on board, I tell you," said the sentry, waxing wrath. "You must go back where you come from. Them's my orders. Go back—else I'll make yer."

"No, señor, no; for the love of heaven, no," said the old man (he was quite old, and very poorly dressed), cringing low and speaking in weak, whining tones.

But he could not wheedle the stern sentry into forgetfulness of his duty.

"I tell you you shan't come by. Go down into your boat again, will you or won't you? Must I make you? then—"

A scuffle ensued. For half a second the old man struggled helplessly in the soldier's iron grasp, and then was borne heavily to the ground.

"For shame, man! he's old enough to be your father," shouted a strong young voice from the group by this time attracted to the spot; for most of the loungers on the deck had come to the end of the poop, and more or less indifferently were looking down upon the scene. If none save chivalrous Frank Wriottesley seemed disposed to raise a protest against the soldier's conduct, it was because—trained in the strict school of military discipline—they recognized the sacred functions of a sentinel and the orders intrusted to him.

But Frank Wriottesley spoke. Nay, more; jumping hastily down the companion-ladder, he went forward to interpose personally for the protection of the old man.

"Hands off!" he said pretty sharply to the sentry. "The man's done no harm; let him go."

"My orders was to let no person aboard unless passed by an officer, sir."

"Let him alone then. You were not ordered to assault people. I'll answer for him," and with that Frank lifted the old gentleman to his feet, and propped him against the bulwarks.

"Who are you? What do you want?" asked Frank.

The other for reply began fumbling in his pockets, with such evident haste and anxiety, that it seemed doubtful whether he did not seek some hidden weapon wherewith to wreak vengeance on the outrager of his honor. But while Wriottesley was debating whether he should seize the old man's hands, they reappeared from the depths of his musty alpaca coat bearing a bundle of cards, one of which, with a lowly reverence, he presented to his preserver.

On it was printed:

MARIANO BELLOTA,

Dealer in Moorish Curiosities, Spanish Fans and Laces,

FURNITURE FOR HIRE—BILLS CASHED,

7 CRUTCHETT'S RAMP,

GIBRALTAR.

"I'm blest if it ain't the Viscount!" cried Honeybun.

"Yes, 'Viscount;' I am the Viscount, señores. The best shop in all the Gibraltar. Cigars, money, what you want."

"To think of old Viscount being still to the fore!" went on Honeybun. "He was as old as the hills twenty years ago, and here he is at his trade the same as ever."

Meanwhile the Viscount went among the officers, handing them his cards and begging their patronage. This sobriquet of his he had earned ages ago, when a certain young nobleman in a marching regiment had been his familiar friend. So he said himself, and he was never tired of quoting the Viscount: but the real story was, that in some curious bill transaction, his lordship had been goaded into giving Bellota a sound thrashing.

"Don't go to Solomon, señores—Solomon Corta Bolsas; he awful Jew," said the old man with each card.

He had a nasty cringing manner, and would not look you in the face. His eyes were always downcast, except when now and then a rapid furtive glance upward showed that he was not unobservant of his fellow-men, especially such as he hoped to bleed. This Solomon he mentioned was the opposition dealer—one of those on the Mole who had betrayed Bellota's insidious attack upon the ship. There was a terrible rivalry between the two, extending to the sacrifice of a half-farthing's profit by one for the mere pleasure of outwitting or underselling the other. Half a farthing—no more. There was a limit to the luxury.

"Ain't you got one of them things for me?" shouted Honeybun. "I know you of old, Viscount. Mayhap I'll do you a good turn for old times' sake."

"You know me? Thank you, señor; yes, you know me," went on Bellota, jumping at the fact, and trading on it at once, not that he recognized Honeybun, but because the statement was of value as an advertisement. "You know how good I served you—chest of drawers, big bath, fans, *abanicos* from Cahdiz, Malaga figures, Moorish trays, rugs, cigars—all you got from me first-rate—no?"

"You don't remember me personally, perhaps," went on Honeybun, cautiously. "I was here when the Princess Charlotte's Light Infantry lay here, nigh on twenty years ago. Do you mind that there cawr?"

"*Sr, sr*, señor, yes. I have the good memory. Plenty regiments come here—plenty officers. They come all to the Viscount for what they want. Thank you, señor. *Mil gracias.*"

"Lord George Honister was our colonel in those days," went on Honeybun, addressing the company generally, and in the small voice he assumed when speaking of lords and high-

mightinesses. "We drove four-in-hand"—("Company" had been inside the coach with the rest of the servants)—"sometimes right up to the top of the Rock. Up there," he added, pointing to the signal-station, a straight, steep wall like the side of a house, along which nothing short of a team of monkeys, native born, could hope to travel. "Young Fairfax used to tool the drag."

This tremendous statement drew every one on to Honeybun at once. He was assailed with a dozen questions and a dozen incredulous shouts, and no one noticed the deathly pallor that had come over Bellota's face.

"Aha! yes, yes!" went on Honeybun. "It's true as gospel. But no one could have done it like George Fairfax—the wildest slip was George. You'd seldom meet such in a month of Sundays. Up to every devilment and wickedness; horse-racing, yacht-sailing, gambling, flirting—ay, and sometimes worse."

"He bad man, damned rascal, villain!" shrieked old Bellota suddenly in a crescendo note, and then finding that words failed him in English, he lapsed into his native tongue, pouring forth, with wildest gesticulation and in furious tones a perfect torrent of abuse. Might a bad stroke of lightning cut the dog-souled, black-hearted thief in two. Might the torments of a certain warm place await him, and every other two-faced, double-dealing English officer. Might he and they suffer from bad fleas; might they die of the closed colic; might a withering sickness palsy all their powers—the robbers, the shameless, the indecent, the scandalous.

So much and more streamed forth with the wildest rapidity, he being of course all the while utterly and completely unintelligible to his listeners. They, surprised, began to sheer off one by one, thinking the old gentleman slightly crazed.

"You've got his shirt out somehow, Honeybun; he'll do you a mischief. What did you say?"

"He must be mad," replied the paymaster, who did not care to be more communicative.

But he knew right well in his own heart why Bellota loathed the sound of George Fairfax's name; and he was sorry that he had re-opened the sore by this thoughtless reference to his former master.

And now Frank Wriottesley again interposed, and taking the old man, still spluttering forth abusive words, led him to a seat. But Bellota shook himself free, gathered up his hat, handkerchief and the cards, which in his fury he had scattered about the deck, and hastily left the ship.

CHAPTER II.

DON MARIANO AT HOME.

THE shabbily-dressed old gentleman who had left the troopship "Upnor Castle" in such a hurry was the representative of a good Spanish family, which, at the time Gibraltar fell into the hands of the English, had been settled for years upon the Rock.

The Bellotas were not *grandees* of Spain, but they boasted that their blood was as blue as the best. Their possessions were not large, but they got from them enough to eat. They were well connected too; cousins of the Guzmans of Tarifa, of the Gazules of Alcala, the Miriñaques of Casares, the Pan-y-Aguas and the Bebe-aguardientes of the Sierra. One ancestor of the house had fought with Cortes and Pizarro in the New World; another had helped to grill the Flemings, a third had himself been grilled by the Holy Office. The Bellotas were especially proud of a certain Don Joaquin, whose bravery in the Moorish wars had won for him and his heirs forever a good slice of Tarik's rock; unfortunately for the Bellotas, Admiral Rooke came and administered to the estate, and the property passed into other hands.

At the time of the capture two courses were open to the natives: they might remain and swear allegiance to the newcomers, or they might remove themselves altogether. In their decision upon this important point, the Bellotas were divided. Several members of the family migrated, but Don Bartolomeo, the head of the house, refused to stir, and when he heard how the others had fared, he thought he had chosen the wiser part. Of those that committed themselves to the intricate mountain paths and weary leagues of waste, inhospitable land, many died. The neighboring towns of Nimena, Gaucin, Medina Sidonia, and Xeres opened their gates to a few, but the Bellotas who left Gibraltar were scattered to the four winds of heaven. Don Bartolomeo escaped such sufferings certainly, but other trials were in store for him. He was doomed to see the decay of his house. Too proud and too indolent to work, he and his would have died of absolute starvation, had not a lump of bread or a handful of beans been food enough for a family in these southern lands. By degrees the Bellotas sank lower and lower in the social scale, and at the time I write of Mariano Bartolomeo Bellota of Peñafior, in whom were centred all the honors of a failing house, had long kept a huckster's shop in a narrow *cul de sac*, and was to all outward seeming poor as a church mouse.

That which had been long his dwelling—House No. 47, District 29, as it was styled in the official records of the place—was a rattle-trap, tumble-down edifice, which seemed saved from falling only because it was permitted to lean against the house at the opposite side. The two might have been part of a child's card-castle. The street itself was a long staircase—nothing more—a succession of wide steps, none of them very steep, yet impracticable save to the sure-footed donkeys of the water-carriers, with their burden of kegs borne in a pack-saddle like a cradle. At the top of the street rose the sheer, straight wall of the Rock, closing the view and the ventilation. There was not much fresh air astray in Crutchett's Ramp. The clothes-lines with their steaming burdens hanging in rows forbade it to circulate; yet when a ray of sunlight glinted across the narrow street, the place became picturesque and pleasant for all its frowsy stuffiness. These very curtains of clothes, staring white as only the southern sun can bleach them, or patched blue, red and yellow in as many colors as Joseph's coat, gave a quaint beauty to the scene. This was heightened by the red-tiled, overhanging eaves, and the nondescript attire of the passers-by—women with bright kerchiefs bound about their heads, longshore sailors in jerseys striped blue and white, or real Spaniards in crimson sashes, wide-brimmed velvet hats, and suits of dark claret brown.

Here in a dingy, poky little shop, not much bigger than a pill-box, Mariano Bellota had done business for years, sitting far within among his wares, like an evil-minded spider in its web, trying all he knew to entice his customers to enter his den. He sold everything—printed forms for the use of the sergeants of the garrison, salt butter and "sogers" to be eaten by the privates and their wives; candles, pipe-clay, tobacco, pipes, cloth, oil-skin coats, knives, pig-skins, piece goods—everything was fish that came to his net. He never sent a buyer away; if the article required was not in his shop he would not confess it, but always said, "I have it, I have it; *si, señor, lo tengo*, I have it in my other store. I will bring it to your worship in half a moment, or to-night, or to-morrow." And he bought it forthwith, probably at half the price he charged for it, from some brother in the trade.

From the earliest period in his commercial enterprises, want of capital had been his most grievous need. He wanted money, that he could afford to have lying out, invested in a dozen different ways—in smuggling ventures to the neighboring ports of Spain, in doing "bits of stiff," and taking up such paper as was flying about at the tail of some barrack "kite." His prayer day and night was for cash—doubloons, hard dollars,

"*duros, pesos y fuertes*—dollars strong and heavy." "*Ay Dios mio!*" he would cry, "when shall I have enough to begin?" He knew better than most people the exact value of a shilling, and, for the matter of that, of a copper *ochavo*, a Spanish coin, the fraction of a farthing. Although not a lineal descendant of the peculiar people, he had the Jewish instinct, if not Jewish blood, in his veins. He would toil day and night, and walk from one end of the Rock to the other. He bought and swapped, and sold and bought again, making all that passed through his hands pay him toll. And yet even when his dream was half accomplished, to listen to him you would think him on the verge of pauperism, with starvation staring him in the face. He always thrust this forward when making a bargain: "*Soy un pobre; un pobre y no tengo na-a*—I am poor; a poor miserable devil, without a rap in the world."

With the officers of the garrison he was always most anxious to open relations, for there was more money to be made out of them than others. He took to letting out furniture for hire, simply to get the *entrée* to the barracks. With admission came other opportunities—profitable purchases of cast-off uniforms, or the household effects of those ordered suddenly away. By and by came occasions for lending money; at first in small sums, then more and more as he found he had capital. From money lending to cashing checks and bills upon London was an easy transition. The ice once broken, his transactions extended, till by one lucky *coup* he pocketed a lot of money. He had had the wit to ferret out that, although young Lord P— was living too fast, and always in want of money, his security was excellent. Bellota therefore bought up all his lordship's paper, assumed all his liabilities, and by and by, when everything was paid, got cent. per cent. profit. The Viscount in a rage thrashed him, but Don Mariano did not mind. Very handsome damages were paid for the assault, and as time rolled on, Bellota looked back with complacency to his connection with Lord P—. From it dated all his prosperity, and from that time forth the Viscount was always in his mouth. He dazzled every customer, friend and foe with the title and name of his patron; till one day he was himself christened Viscount, and the name stuck to him forever.

But although money now began to pour in fast, and more than one golden doubloon lay hidden in the folds of the old *suja* stowed away in his strong box, Don Mariano still followed his trade—still stuck to the shop in Crutchett's Ramp and made it his head-quarters. Here he had laid the foundations of his wealth, and here he preferred to remain. Though he owned other stores, other hands in his pay did the work;

though his money was laid out in many ventures—in an hotel at Tangier, the bull-ring at Algeciras, fleets of *faluchas* for mysterious trade with Spain—he clung to his old habit of tout-ing for himself, and, above all, to the old den in which his youth and manhood had been passed. He dined in his shop off a slice of sausage, a bowl of *gaspacho*, a salad or an orange stew, and slept up-stairs.

Nevertheless there were passages in the past life of this old curmudgeon which in some measure compensated for his surliness and avarice. He was one of those who lived through the terrible epidemic that swept Gibraltar in 1828. He had escaped himself, but with him only one child of the seven that called him father. First Encarnacion went, then Rafarillo, then Pepe. Next his wife—patient and devoted mother, died. Three other children followed; Dolores was the last, but fate spared her, or Mariano would hardly have wished to survive the rest. With what anxiety had he not watched over this last one, dreading each moment the symptoms he knew by this time so well: the fevered brow, the bloodshot eye, and the aching back! Yes; Dolores, mercifully, was spared and for her Bellota lived. For her sake he toiled from day to day, hoping that fortune might come, only for her. He was wrapped up in this Dolores, the sweet, motherless child, who grew up straight as a sapling, with all the glowing beauty of her race flashing from her big, bright eyes. For her sake he had remained a widower, dreading for her a step-mother's harshness. "Happy Adam and Eve," runs the Spanish saying, "for neither knew father-in-law nor step-mother." It would have been better for Dolores if she had been subjected to some older woman's care and correction. She grew up like a wild, wayward child, never thwarted, never checked. One day, quite unexpectedly, she disappeared from home. Mariano, like one distracted, searched high and low; but to no purpose. Dolores with her lover had flown to England.

Rage and despair filled the father's heart, and with all the warmth of his southern nature, he swore revenge—an impotent oath, for he was powerless against the man who had lured his daughter from him. But his anger vanished when Dolores returned, pale, careworn, dying. In that cold, northern land, unlike her sunny birthplace, she had pined at once. The seeds of disease sown among English fogs, where, the Spaniards say, the sun is seen only through a blind, grew apace, nourished and fostered by the remorse that gnawed at her heart when she thought of the house in Crutchett's Ramp and her lonely, deserted father. Yet that father welcomed her back with a warmth of affection that no injury could efface, caressed and

petted her as of old, and spent hundreds of his beloved doubloons in vain efforts to bring back life-blood to her faded cheek. In a few months Dolores died, leaving a tiny baby, to keep the Bellotas of the Rock from absolute extinction.

This Dolores the younger is the heroine of our story.

Having had some experience in the management of girls, Don Mariano resolved to avoid, this time, the errors that had led to his daughter's death. As soon as the months of babyhood were past, the little Lola—sweet diminutive of her name—was consigned to the care of some of his kindred near Ximena. A cousin's wife, now a widow, who resided with her family at the Cortijo de Agua Dulce (Sweetwater Farm), just a mile or two out of the town, consented to bring up the orphan babe. Here she thrived and grew; old Bellota wending his way on an old, flea-bitten, gray horse, as often as he could tear himself from money-making, to gladden his eyes with a sight of the child that was fast growing to be the living likeness of the mother she had never known. It is probable that her grandfather would have left her always at Ximena, had not the irksomeness of the journey at his advanced age, and the loss of time it entailed, pressed heavily upon him. By the time Lola was old enough to be sent to school, he fetched her back to the Rock to enter the convent of Nuestra Señora de la Europa, where the good sisters were to have charge of her till she was grown up.

A high-walled garden not far from the road leading to the south end of the Rock was Lola's playground and prison, when the studies she hated were at an end. But they seemed endless, these studies. She was to learn everything the good nuns could teach her, English alone excepted. Dead, deserted Dolores had known English, imperfectly perhaps, but enough to understand the tempting, insinuating language which had lured her from her father's house. The recollection of that terrible loss was still fresh in his mind; his heart was as sore to-day as if the blow had just been struck, even though he kept the secret to himself. He loathed the whole class of officers, *los oficiales*, to one of whom he owed his sorrows, and with him all who owned English as their native tongue. So Lola was to have no language but that substitute for the pure rolling Castilian which in Andalusia and round about passes for Spanish. But all other "extras" were included in her quarterly bills, and among them were not only music and embroidery, but the use of the fan; perhaps if her grandfather had been admitted to the private games and gossip of the convent, he might have awakened to the fact that in spite of all his anxious forethought the girl was certain to taste of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge.

She and her companions led secluded lives no doubt, but the very air they breathed was impregnated with a subtle poison which they drank in eagerly, because at their age it was like nectar after dry tasks and dreary hours of confinement within the convent walls. Foolish girls are elsewhere to be found who dote upon the military, to whom the glitter of a button and the color of a crimson coat are irresistible attractions. Perhaps there was some excuse for these school-girls thus immured in a fortress-town. Soldiers and the toys of the trade surrounded the convent. A dozen times a day its walls and quiet cloisters echoed to the measured tread of troops passing to and fro; their glancing bayonets flashed reflections across the convent windows; martial music was as often in the ears of its inmates as matins or miserere; bugles with brazen throats, or clattering drums, saluted the dawning day or setting sun: while most evenings the breeze, scented with the strong perfume of the *dama de noche*, the "lady of the night," whose flowers keep their fragrance for the dark hours, brought with it the soft strains of some regimental band performing bewitching music in the Alameda gardens below. Already each of the elder girls treasured up the recollection of some *guapo chico*, some interesting youth whom they had seen for a moment as he cantered by, bound to hunt the fox on the slopes near Magazine Hill or between the rivers, or marching down to mount guard at Ragged Staff or on the Neutral Ground. Not a few too had elder sisters versed in the gay doings at Carnival time, with many reminiscences of the masked balls at the theatre and their partners there, of the fairs at San Roque and Algeciras, their bull-fights and their splendor. Thus was Lola brought up in the very midst of the dangers from which her grandfather devoutly desired to shield her. She even learned English under the rose; not much, it is true, beyond words and phrases, but enough to talk at times in a strange sort of gibberish, the only merit of which was the music of her voice.

Old Bellota lived on in blissful ignorance. Lola did not confess to him,—she was hardly aware herself of the notions she was imbibing. She seldom saw him moreover; only on state occasions, when she was escorted by a pair of demure sisters to pay a visit to Crutchett's Ramp. She traveled then to the foot of the staircase street in a high-wheeled, hooded calèche drawn by a sober mule, and driven by an ancient gardener perched upon one of the shafts. Little Lola was as prim and sober to look upon as *Sor Escolastica*, her chaperone, or their carriage horse, the mule. Her eyes were always downcast, and her pretty lips drawn together as tightly and primly as the reverend mother could desire.

To see her in repose, noting the marvelous regularity of feature, the well-chiseled nose and chin, the eyebrows arched like a well-strung bow, the tiny ears, the beautiful pose of the head and its matchless outline—this very perfectness disappointed you. It was too severe, the loveliness of a statue, as a gem of art inimitable, but in nature almost annoyingly faultless and correct.

But hers was the beauty of the dawn before sunrise. When she raised her eyes, when those lids with their long, drooping lashes were unclosed, it was as if upon a cold, gray morning landscape, cheerless and uninteresting, the sun had suddenly burst forth to gladden all around with its brightness. Lola's eyes worked like magic upon her face, rippling her lips into a smile, and waking every feature into glorious life. Simply to look at her then was a pleasure; and if it were possible to escape the sorcery of her face and take in other details, you saw that her hair was splendid in its lustre and luxuriance; that her figure, though extremely slight, was exquisitely proportioned. In stature she was above the middle height, had hands like snowflakes, and a foot noticeable even in this land of small feet, where the *pit Madrileña* has passed into a proverb.

Such was Lola Bellota at the time the Halberdiere reached Gibraltar. She was on the point of leaving the convent, her school-days ended. Girls grow fast in these latitudes, and at seventeen our heroine was quite ready to "come out," had her grandfather intended to launch her upon the giddy world of Crutchett's Ramp. Here, at least, she would have been safe from the wiles of the men who were Bellota's aversion. Few of the English officers scaled the steep steps to Don Mariano's den. Those who wanted furniture went to his other shop in Waterport Street, and in cashing bills and usury Don Mariano did not always appear—an agent in the best part of the town did all that, although Bellota looked after the business and possible defaulters with a sharpness that proved it was his own money that was at stake.

But now the time had come for him to leave Crutchett's Ramp, if not altogether, at least as a residence. This was no place for his "little pearl," as he loved to style his grandchild. She required something more in keeping with the education she had received, and the inheritance she might expect when he was gone. But amid the conflict of many interests, Bellota hesitated long as to the choice of a new dwelling. His desire to shield Lola from all possible harm incited him to leave the Rock altogether and seek a home in Campamento or San Roque. But he could not give up his gains. Money-making had grown to be second nature with him, and to retire would have been his

death. As a compromise he might live away from Gibraltar, journeying to and fro daily; but at his time of life he could not face such constant toil.

At length, after much anxious debating, he decided to occupy a cottage of his own which lay in a sheltered nook above Rosia Bay, facing the Straits and the west wind. Making this his head-quarters, he might direct all his affairs from it; and as business would probably call him often from home, he resolved to leave little Lola in safe hands. Dueñas are an institution in Spain; she should have a dueña to watch over her and keep her from mischief. Tia Josefa, his housekeeper, was the very person for the post. He had taken her as a servant a year or two back, because he liked the industry and perseverance with which she hawked her fish in Crutchett's Ramp. She had served him well; and he thought he could trust her better than a stranger. Such was the establishment at Rosia Cottage—the old man, the gay girl, fresh from school restrictions, and the sober dueña, full of the importance of her new rank, but ready, like the rest of her class, to sell herself to the highest bidder.

CHAPTER III.

SAN ROQUE FAIR.

WHEN the time came for the San Roque fair and bull-fights, Dolores begged hard to go; but Don Mariano was very doubtful about it.

Fair-time in southern Spain is like a second carnival—even to sedate Spaniards a time of license and extravagant enjoyment. Every town has its fair at its regular season, from Seville, queen of Andalucia, down to Pedro Abad with its three houses and one church. The whole population joins in the fun such as it is; moving forth bodily to take up its residence on the very spot, under the trees of the Alameda, in the principal street, or out on the open plains beyond the city walls. Here they spend their time, living in temporary shanties, some furnished with taste, while others are mere shelters of reeds and freshly-gathered boughs. They visit and are visited from one hut to another; the old people gossip, the young flirt; there is dancing when the sun goes down, the fan-sellers light up their stalls, and from the outskirts of the fair, where are picketed the horses and the herds for sale, comes the tinkle of bells, a mule's shrill scream, mingled with the music of a guitar or the rattle of castanets.

All this of itself, Mariano Bellota felt, would be dangerous

intoxication for such an inexperienced child as Lola. Had San Roque, however, lain in the far-off Sierra, a purely Spanish town with naught but native surroundings, it would have mattered less. But here, at the foot of the rock, it was close to the fascinations he especially dreaded. San Roque would be thronged with English officers, insolent and independent as usual, ogling every pretty face, regardless of the dueña's scowl or the knife of the jealous lover. Don Mariano was still smarting from the scene on board the "Upnor Castle." Honeybun had re-opened an old wound, never properly healed and ready at any moment to break out and bleed afresh. So for a long time the old man was very stout in his refusal.

"They are all going," said Lola, with the persistency of her sex. "Carmen, and Encarnacion, Aurelia, Paca—" and she ran over a string of names, all old school-mates and friends.

"But Carmen Garcia goes with her brother, and Aurelia has her own mother's sister living at San Roque, and Paca—"

"And have I not you to take care of me, *abuelito mio* (my little grandfather)?"

"I? By the love of the sainted apostles! Can I go and neglect my affairs? You must be mad, child."

"You might, for me, for one day. But you never do what I ask you," said Lola, pouting and with tears in her eyes.

"Don't cry, child. I cannot bear you to be sad, though the proverb says, Never believe in a dog's lameness or a woman's tears."

"*Anda!* Go to, grandfather. Let Josefa take charge of me. Is she not sufficient? Of what are you afraid? Think you I shall run away?"

Don Mariano crossed himself devoutly and visibly shuddered.

"Do not talk like that, Lola, even in jest," he said, very earnestly.

"But it was a joke, only a joke. Think you I could ever leave you, grandfather of my heart? Have you not nursed me, and kept me, and loved me ever since I was born? I cannot forget that; never, while there is breath left in me."

What had dead Dolores said? Her protestations of love had been no less sincere, yet how empty had her words proved!

"My child," said Bellota, sadly, "there is an old saying that we bring up our daughters as rose-gardens grow roses and flower-pots grow pinks, for some one else to gather."

"But, grandfather, am I never to leave the Rock? *Que fastidioso!* How stupid! Must I sit here all day long in the house and in the garden, and never go into the street?"

"Maids and falcons should be kept out of the strong light," said the grandfather, quoting a proverb.

"Would you have me grow up like celery, always in the dark?"

"I would have you white and pure at heart as the celery is at the roots."

"*Ay de mi!* But I weary of this life."

"You will have plenty of fun when you go to the *cortijo*, to your cousins at Ximena. There will be *tertulias*, reunions, dancing, and—who knows?—you will be choosing some handsome lover over yonder, some tall *chico* will take your fancy, and you will never more return to me."

"Señor, *matrimonio y mortaja del cielo baja* (marriages and death-beds are settled in heaven). Besides, I want no *novio*, no lover, grandfather, if he is to separate me from you."

"Young girls all say that. But wait till you meet one you like—pouf! you'd forget me as fast as they fry eggs. Why try to prevent it? I might as well seek to hedge in a plain with one pair of gates."

"*Pues*, in any case there is no hurry, there are more days to come than sausages."

"Don't leave it too long, August and harvest don't come every day. In last year's nests there are no birds left. Think now, what of your cousin Lucas?"

"I hate him. He gives me *mala sombra* he is so dark and sour; so cross-grained and obstinate. No one dare say 'This mouth is my own' when Lucas Peñafior stands by."

"Nor yet Alejandro?"

"That mountebank! Let him keep his love for the *mosas* (girls) he meets when the column is on the line of march. As for me, I have no taste for the life of John Soldier."

"And little Miguel? will he not do either?"

"What next? a husband of gingerbread, that I might eat him at one mouthful! He is too small and insignificant."

"You are harder to please, *hija* (daughter), than Sancho Panza's doctor. Do you think the angel Gabriel will come down from heaven to court you?"

"It is a solemn matter, *abuelo*. We do not marry for one day only, but for all one's life. I want no husband yet, I seek but to go to the fair; and to that you would agree had you not a heart harder than the rocks of the stony Sierra."

"I refuse you only for your own good, Lola *mia*."

"*Gracias*," replied Lola, making him a low courtesy. "I am obliged to your worship."

"So formal?" Till then they had used the familiar "thee and thou"; now Lola addressed her grandfather in the third person, calling him *usted* (your worship). "So formal? give me a kiss, child. I suppose you must have your way then."

'*Criado de abuelo nunca bueno*,' says the proverb. Those brought up by foolish old grandfathers like me are always spoiled."

"No, no, no!" cried Lola, vehemently. "Don't say that. *abuelito* of my soul, '*Quien no sabe de abuelo no sabe de bueno*.' No one knows what kindness is unless they have had a grandfather, a dear old darling of my heart," and Lola overwhelmed him with caresses and a dozen endearing epithets.

Of the hundreds bound to the fair the Sunday after, none was like Lola Bellota. It is the custom for Spanish ladies to attend such "functions" in fair white transparent draperies, relieved only by a brilliant spot of color in their hair. Lola was in the fashion, all in bridal white, with a crimson blossom just below her hair, and in her hand a pretty red fan. Old age comes on so fast in this climate that there is an especial "*carpe diem*" freshness about youth. Lola was like a bud in its first blushing bloom. The glitter in her eyes might have been drops of early dew. And then her tender beauty shone out the more by contrast with her companion. Josefa, her dueña, was fat and forty, but no longer fair. Her figure, the pride of her maiden prime, was gone; and her face, now commonplace enough, was further injured by a layer of thick white powder assumed in honor of the day—as we wear white gloves or run up a flag on great occasions. The cosmetic hung about that unmistakable mustache as snow clings to the black branches of a tree; and now and again a few flakes descended to soil the glossiness of the magnificent black silk dress, which it was Josefa's good fortune to wear upon this occasion.

A *calesa* had been provided by Don Mariano, into which, with becoming pride, our couple mounted at the garden gate of the cottage. In this—an old-fashioned yellow machine hung on high wheels—hardly hidden by the over-arching hood, they traveled at a foot-pace, an easy prey for all who chose to stare; and as the beach was thronged with holiday makers, also bound to San Roque, they were not few who wished to look at Lola, and who did so in spite of the dueña's frowns and muttered maledictions. The good dame had never heard of the Medusa's head; had she known of it she might have been disposed to exchange it for her own powdered face, just to punish these unblushing admirers. From the English officers who cantered by, their white puggerees streaming to the winds, came not only bold glances, but one or two reined up their horses to a walk, and kissed their hands, speaking words not altogether unintelligible to Lola; for a girl can interpret looks and compliments, even with a limited knowledge of a foreign tongue. Josefa was less fort-

unate with those who possessed with her a common language. At the first of the many drinking booths, just where the sands join the dilapidated high road, came a torrent of chaff, as the driver of the *calesa* halted for his first whet of aguardiente.

"Are you twin sisters, gossip?" cried one; "a pretty pair. Like as two cherries on one stalk."

"Say rather like the ripe cherry and the withered branch."

"A tin sword and a gold scabbard."

"Never trust a shoeless vagrant, nor a taciturn man, nor a woman with a beard," said another, quoting a proverb, and referring to Doña Josefa's whiskers.

"*Hijos!*" cried Josefa, exasperated, "you are as sharp as bolsters. It comes to the grayhound by inheritance to have a long tail, and to you evil-mouthed have come the hairy tongues of your base-bred mothers. As is the bell so is the clapper."

"Take care how you play with a jackass; he may hit you in the eye with his tail."

"Grandmother, do you want a *novio*?"

"Not one that is as ugly as hunger."

"The ugliest *olla* (soup sauce-pan) finds a lid to suit it."

"*Calla*. Shut up! Nowadays the chickens crow louder than the cocks. You are wearisome as frogs, and as bumptious as artichokes. *Anda*, drunkard," she went on to the *calesero*, "forward or here we shall find our graves."

And with that the trio proceeded. But Doña Josefa's temper continued ruffled until they reached the last steep hill that leads up to the town.

They alighted upon the outskirts of the Alameda, where the fair was held, which, like a wide avenue, stretches from the town itself to the bull-ring and the barracks. At one end of the now busy street the grass of eleven indolent months is fast being stamped out by hundreds of bustling feet; at the other the purple hills of Los Barrios and the Carnicero Sierra. On either side sloped the fertile uplands, dotted with olive grove and vineyard, one way to the Giant Rock and the shore of the Gibraltar Bay, in the other to the wide-stretching cork-wood of Almoraima to Castellar, and the blue mountains round and beyond Ronda. Bright colors in the landscape; the sky like lapis-lazuli; the fields of green and gold; bright color also and vivid contrast among the crowds that thronged the fair. A glut of yellow kerchiefs, crimson waistcloths, and linen, white and glittering as snow in the fierce bright light. Rich color and showy contrast everywhere—heightened by the picturesqueness that still clings to all in Andalucia—in the gay trappings of mule and horse, the fluttering pennons of the Santiago lancers,

posted to keep order near the ring, the huge jars of the brown-skinned water-carriers, the tangled rags of the beggars, halt or maimed or with elephantiasis, riding their own horses or crawling along upon all fours. Here and there in stormy discussion a couple of dealers bargained for cattle, corn or calico, talking rapidly, gesticulating wildly, and perchance waxing so wroth that the knife will settle the dispute. In the central street, at the best booths, were sold fans and brass work, tall oil lamps of classical shape, mighty basins bigger than Mambrino's helmet, toys, gloves, silver work from Cordova, and Albacete knives, long murderous weapons, with blades keen as razors, bearing appropriate mottoes: "I am my owner's champion," "Do not draw me without reason, nor without honor return me to my sheath," and so forth. Here too were the drinking shops for the sale of *vino y licores* for those who needed them—Manzanilla of San Lucar de Barrameda, aguardiente, British beer and *orchata* (a hot syrup).

In the place of honor, the young men's club of San Roque, the "*circulo artistico recreativo*" as they call it, had built a grand shed, rough in outline, filled in with green boughs and stalks of maize, hung with bright chintz, and having a boarded floor. Around this bower were clustered the *pollos*, the chickens, the fast young men of the place and their blue-blooded friends.

As the time for the bull-fights approached, the crowds upon the Alameda visibly thinned. Already the hoarse uproar that comes from the impatient audience was heard plainly in the distant ring. The general public had long since taken their seats, fighting for places near the *Barandilla*—the lowest tier, whence they might hang over and in security insult the savage beast when driven near the boards. These were now followed by the upper classes who could afford to pay for reserved seats in the *sombra* or shade; smartly-dressed ladies like our Lola, visitors from the Rock, the Governor-General of Algeciras, or "the camp of Gibraltar, that fortress" so runs his warrant, "being temporarily in the hands of the English."

Tia Josefa began to be impatient to be off too. She was *aficionada*, devoted to the sport, and a bull-fight was not to be seen every day.

"*Vamos*," she cried. "*Vamos*, Lola of my heart. We shall be late, and miss the *entrada* (entrance of the bull-fighters to the ring)."

"It is so fresh out here, Josefa, I think I had rather stay away altogether. I know I shall not care for the function. No, I shall hate it. It is cruel, and cruelty hurts and displeases me. Do not let us go."

"Not go! *Santisissima Virgen!* Not go! and for what did we come all this distance in a *calesa*? A journey like that to the *infierno* (to the lower regions), from which the good saints preserve me?"

"We came to see the *jaleo*; the excitement; the crowd of people at the fair."

"*Ea!*" replied Josefa, scornfully. "Throw that bone to another dog. Tell that to my grandmother the one-eyed. We came to see the bulls, *los Toros*, the bulls, the bulls."

"Then go you, and leave me here."

This was, of course, a perfectly impracticable suggestion. Josefa had positive orders never to let Lola out of her sight.

The girl left to herself might get into mischief—children always got into mischief—and Don Mariano would be sure to hear of it. If Josefa was to see the bull-fight at all, it must be in company with Lola.

"How can you say a bull-fight displeases you, you who have never seen one?"

"Paca at the convent told me. She has seen plenty. They kill the horses, and there is blood all about, and danger. I am afraid."

"You to talk like that! a Bellota of the best and bluest blood to talk of being afraid! What would the *amo* Don Mariano say?"

"He would not mind."

"But Paca and Encarnacion? a pretty joke for them when they hear you came to the gates of the ring, but did not dare to enter."

Perhaps the fear of ridicule from her intimates was the strongest argument on the dueña's side. But just then an unexpected re-inforcement came to Josefa's aid.

Two small girls decked out like bridesmaids passed at the moment, and seeing Lola, rushed up to her with shrieks of delight.

"*Lolita! querida!*" and a dozen pet diminutives in high notes soon brought the rest of the party to Lola's side.

It was the family of cousins from Ximena, who had come to San Roque for the fair. Mother and daughter, one son, Miguel, and the two children of a friend and connection in their native town.

They all kissed Lola first on one cheek then on the other with much effusion, and made one or two complimentary remarks on her appearance, when Ramona, the eldest daughter, a bold-eyed, brown-cheeked *mosa* (girl) broke in with:

"*Ea! corre prisa.* Make haste, time presses. We shall lose the *entrada*."

"This gentle lambkin does not wish to go," said Josefa, seeking support which she immediately obtained.

"Not go! *Tontería*, foolishness!" cried Ramona.

"And why not?" asked Doña Teresa, a thin, shrewish woman with a wiry voice and a great sense of her own importance.

"I'm afraid they will disgust me."

"You have no spirit, child. This sport is fit for kings. I have heard my uncle say—my uncle who was substitute administrator of kitchen-garden refuse at the Court of Aranjuez—that he has seen the king, Don Fernando and his Queen (may God have them in his holy keeping), at many functions. It was sport for them: shall we then make a nose at it?"

"It is a good old sport," cried Ramona, enthusiastically.

"As old as the itch or the way to walk."

"You will not fear, my cousin, when I am by your side," cried the valiant Miguel, a youth some five feet high, whose attenuated legs looked as if they had been shrunk at one and the same time with the tight trousers that adorned them.

"When the bull is dead you can pull his tail," said Ramona, contemptuously. "Who taught you to *lorear* (fight the bull)?"

"I am small, but I have a stout heart, and fists and muscles!"

"*Calla!*" exclaimed the mother. "Silence! You are like chattering magpies. Come, Lola, it is time to enter."

And in this peremptory fashion Doña Teresa ended the discussion and our heroine's scruples.

Lola when she got inside was not sorry that she had come. All her terrors indeed vanished in the first sensations of surprise and delight. The sight appealed vividly to her senses and made all her pulses throb sharp and fast: for as yet the ghastly drama was not begun, the curtain was still down, and the audience itself was the only spectacle—the wild and picturesque audience beating time to the quaint music of the military band. Over the "*sol*," where the sun struck full upon the crowd, was a densely packed, gay-colored, palpitating mass of humanity; tier above tier of spectators, eager and agitated, drumming their feet against the stone steps, chanting a long, monotonous song like a hoarse chorus to the overture. Great paper fans, red and yellow, were in incessant use, repeating the movement and the color of the flags waving on the topmost walls of the ring against the azure sky. Hundreds of British soldiers in scarlet were dotted through the throng, their gaudy coats seeming for the first time neither garish nor out of place amid so much that was bright and vivid.

Here and there a couple (*una pareja*) of the civil guard, the gendarmes of Spain, hovered ready to interfere in case of a row,

backed up by the bayonets of companies of infantry stationed at commanding points among the throng, and with loaded muskets, in case some small disturbance should all at once expand into a revolution. But the people were mad with other than political excitement: they roared and shouted as do the gods at Astley's or the Surrey, only pausing now and again when the plaintive airs of the Malagueña touched their susceptible hearts, after which they roared louder than ever. The work was hoarse, and drink-encouraging; so that through all the din the cry of the water-sellers never faltered, and the demand and sale for "agua" was never-ceasing. In the universal thirst it was as well perhaps that no stronger beverage was on tap.

The Peñafors with Lola and her dueña soon shook themselves into their seats—not in the *sol* already crowded to excess, where Lucas, the eldest brother, himself an amateur bull-fighter, was stationed with his more intimate friends—but in the more aristocratic "*sombra*," or shade, by this time sheltered from the rays of the declining sun. Josefa fortified herself with a pocketful of ground nuts (*avellanas*), took three tumblers of water running, and was quite ready for anything. The others found friends near with whom to gossip, and Lola listened eagerly to their talk, which was mostly of the coming function. Would it be good?—Without doubt. The bulls were from the herds of the widow Varela, the best brand in Spain.—Who was to kill? Tato, Lagartijo, Dominguez, Gordito, who?—Lagartijo, of course, the little lizard, the most rising "sword" (*espada*) in the land. Tato was no good now, since his hurt at Villa Martin; Dominguez was one-eyed, and Gordito was growing fat and had lost his figure. Ramona said she loved Lagartijo; it was a sight to cure the pains, to see him jump through the bull's horns, to do the *suerte a la Veronica*, the *Volapie*, or receive the charge as a banderillero, but seated in a chair.

Then in the midst of it all the trumpets sounded a flourish, the *alcalde* took his seat, and the bull-fighters entered in procession through doors opened wide, as the full strength of a circus company parades before the sun begins.

Lagartijo has made his bow, has thrown his gorgeous cloak to an eager vassal in the lowest tier of seats; the others have followed suit, and now take post and wait. The *picadors* prick their sorry nags, tottering beneath the loads they carry, and snuffing death already in the air, close alongside the barrier; put lance in rest, and wait. The audience expectant, with nerves tense-strung, grow hushed and dumb. They also wait.

This is the supreme moment. In another second the bull, raging and fuming in his den below the *alcalde*'s seat, will be let loose and then

Why does Tia Josefa scream slightly, and put her hand over her heart? Down in the ring below, close under where they sit, a *picador*, padded and grotesque, in chignon and broad-brimmed hat, awaits like his fellows the second flourish of the trumpets and the bull's first charge.

She recognizes him.

"Jesus! it is my son!" she cries, waving her fan at him. "It is Pepe—Pepe, son of my soul. *Hijo de mis entrañas*. My boy, my beloved boy! Precious infant of my soul, hast thou returned?"

"Your son?" asked Lola, "I never knew you had one."

"Yes this one only. Pepe—Pepe Picarillo the neighbors called him, he was so wild. Pepe, my monkey boy, who left me years ago—who was decoyed from home."

She did not at the moment explain that Pepe had run away. She had perhaps forgotten how she had annexed his earnings, the copper *ochavos* and *cuartos* which he had gained gallantly at the whip's point from the English officers galloping upon the beach.

"And now he is a *picador*?"

"As you see. I did not know he was alive. But he was fond of horses always; and now, *ay!*" cried the mother, realizing for the first time in all its acuteness a thrill of anxiety at the danger he was about to run. "May the Blessed Virgin have him in her keeping this day! May the bulls be mild!"

"Mild bulls!" cried an old woman close by, "and give us no sport?" The terrible danger to Pepe was as nothing to the success of the performance. "Ea, I pray God they may be fiercer than wintry winds, active as a torrent after rain, strong as the summer sun at noon."

Then the first bull rushed in and settled the question in person.

A handsome, brindled beast, with a splendid head, grand horns, stout, sharp, and not too wide apart; all strength and power about the neck and shoulders, in the hind-quarters lithe and active as a cat.

For a short second he pauses, the scene is new to him—as it was to Lola. The glare is nearly blinding after the darkness of his den; and he is dazed by the shouts of the audience. But this irresolution is short-lived: the hated colors flaunting before his eyes, the maddening cries of the spectators wake up to full intensity his fierce desire for revenge upon his enemy—man.

He charges; quick and sharp as a pistol-shot. The *picador* who is nearest rolls over; man and horse, the latter killed, stone dead with a horn-thrust in the chest. Number Two meets the same fate from these cruel horns; Number Three also; the

fourth *picador* turns tail, his horse utterly unmanageable. To him the bull gives chase; overtakes him, lifts both rider and horse bodily upon his horns, throws them to one side and passes on. The man is underneath, shaken but still safe; the horse writhes in agony, ripped up, entangled in his own entrails, reeking in his own gore. Number Five is caught by the barrier, pinned there, held there, the rider falls over at length among the audience, unhurt, but the horse—the patient, helpless horse!—has his back broken and falls when the bull has done with him, a corpse like the rest.

Nothing can resist such terrible fury as this. The bull is master of the position, and as he pauses to take breath, might look around like Alexander panting for new conquests. The ring is strewn with horses dead and dying. Not one *picador* is left; all are dismounted, one or two lie like logs upon the ground under a heap of bones and broken saddlery; another is being helped, limping, out of the arena by the terrified assistants; the *chulos*, who should play the bull on foot with their cloaks, are cowed and shrink towards the shelter of the barriers; Lagartijo, the chief *espada* and captain of the troupe, is alone undaunted, standing in mock bravado with folded arms in the centre of the ring. But what can one man do?

And now the audience, which has hung breathless on every move, grows mad with enthusiasm. Almost to a man they rise to their feet and rend the air with fiendish cries:

“More horses! more horses! Fresh *picadors*! Away with the cloak! Bravo, Toro! Bravo, bull! Bravo! Bravo!”

They have tasted blood, these grave, self-contained, but cruel-hearted Southerners, and nothing less can cloy their appetite now.

But where is Pepe Picarillo the while?

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT CAME OF THE FAIR.

TIA JOSEFA, who had been so keen about coming to the bull-fight, was finding it even more exciting than she expected. The thrilling danger of her son lent a new sensation to the scene. For Pepe Picarillo had been one of the first to fall in the late encounter, though with the true instinct of self-preservation, he had managed to keep his horse between himself and danger. But when lifted to his feet he was still far from safe, and this was only the first act of the play. So Josefa was continually on thorns, crying aloud on the saints, pat-

ron and others, prodigally promising a mass to be sung at the shrine of St. Josephine, seven *rezadas* at that of St. Christopher, and to all candles, which would probably be provided from the store-closets of Don Mariano at Rosia.

We have paused for a moment to see how Picador Pepe had fared, but there had been no pause in the performance. Fresh horses had been dragged in, much against their will, to be also mounted and spurred to death, till the brindled bull had sent some ten or a dozen in all to their long account. But with the glut of his passion had come some diminution of his strength. Weakened now and jaded, the *chulos* engage him with darts barbed but disguised in fringes of colored paper. These are plunged in pairs, one on each shoulder, goading him further to madness as the sticks, rattling together and clotted with gore, hang like a bleeding necklace around his throat.

At last the trumpets sound and summon Lagartijo to go forth to kill.

Taking the usual bumptious oath to slay the bull, or never himself leave the ring alive, he swings round on one foot, throws his black furry hat far from him, and goes alone to the encounter.

Man against bull. Courage and skill against brute force. Which shall prevail?

However cruel and degrading may be called the national sport of Spain, there is no doubt that the crowning act in the drama does something to redeem its character. It is a fine sight to see the *matador* (in Spain better known as the *espada*, or "sword") stand forth alone, single-handed, to do his work. He has special training, of course; without it his act would be simply suicidal. It is indispensable, too, that he should know his bull by heart, and this lesson he has conned from the first onslaught, noting every mood, and turning over in his own mind the various styles of play he will be called upon to employ. But no training suffices to supply the needful nerve. Years of practice are not enough to keep his head cool and his pulse quiet. He carries his life upon the quickness of his eye, the sureness of his foot, the ready strength of wrist and arm; but he must possess also a stout heart.

To Lagartijo, with his intrepid coolness and the easy grace with which he performed his part, it seemed the merest child's play. Right, left; left, right; he waves his short flag to and fro, and waits with sword half concealed the chance that is sure to come ere long. Suddenly he delivers his thrust with lightning speed in and over the horns, a thrust so long and true that the sword-blade is buried to the hilt. The bull totters, looks slowly round with fast-glazing eyes, quivers in all his limbs, and falls suddenly, dead—*Procumbit kumi bos*.

Once more wild cries re-echo from every corner of the amphitheatre; hats are thrown wildly down into the ring; cigars, also, by dozens; one of a group of English officers near Lola, catching the enthusiasm and spirit of his surroundings, takes out his sleeve-links and throws them down to Lagartijo. "*Qué se lo dé! Qué se lo dé!* (Let it be given to him)" resounds from every corner, and because the alcalde hesitates to give the bull to its killer, the whole audience of the *sol* rises to its feet and shouts in chorus, waving their hands in unison, "*Qué se lo dé!*" till Lagartijo is seen to cut off the right ear of the slain beast, in proof of ownership, and throw it up to the officer who gave him the sleeve-links.

And now for a moment Josefa breathes freely. Teams of mules, with bells and colored banners, gallop in to carry off the dead: the attendants strew sand upon the ground, or dry up with earth the sloppy puddles of blood; and the spectators refresh themselves with nuts, fresh water and gossip.

With the new bull the sport was much the same as with the first, the same excitement, the same hairbreadth escapes. Josefa's heart was often in her mouth, and Lola was fast growing sick of the unvarying brutality of the scene. Not so her cousins. Miguel was loud in explanation of all details, and drew many comparisons between this and other fights.

Then came the third bull—a reddish chestnut beast, of powerful frame, but seemingly of sluggish temper. He was of the class called *parados* (halters), which are often the more dangerous because they hang back and will not charge.

The spectators at first waited patiently enough while the *chulos* strove to rouse the bull, and the *picadors* made the usual gestures of defiance, waving their lances and mocking him in derision. But still he hung back, pawing the ground, a sure sign of cowardice; and patience was at length exhausted. *Fuego* (fire)! was loudly demanded on all sides—darts with percussion crackers to explode and singe his flesh. *Fuego! Fuego!* was the cry, coupled with abuse of the *picadors*, loud and unmeasured.

"Go up to him, you cur!" cried one to Pepe.

"Go to your mother, she wants you!" cried another. Poor Josefa!

Now it is by no means imperative upon the *picadors* to go out into the centre of the ring and challenge the bull to charge. Nor can the alcalde, who has otherwise full power to punish them by imprisonment for infraction of the rules, insist upon it. Yet the people, wrong-headed, like every crowd, called loudly upon the chief magistrate to exercise his authority, backing up their demands where it was possible by leaning over the bar-

rier and belaboring the hind-quarters of the horses nearest to them. That which Pepe bestrode was a well-shaped bay, once, perchance, an officer's charger in the neighboring garrison, a "maiden" winner, or foremost for seasons with the Calpe hounds, now a mere bag of bones, with knees faltering and every muscle on the quiver. Yet, from the repeated blows, something of his old spirit awoke, and, after a few vain kicks at the boards behind, he rushed forward—a short, halting, feeble gallop—right into the bull's teeth.

In *tauromaquia* it is an axiom that the man should never take the initiative. He who does so throws away a chance and gives it to the bull. Pepe tried with all his might to stop his horse, but in the effort his bridle broke and he was carried helplessly to destruction.

The bull, as if knowing his advantage, received the horse at horn point, prodded him twice, right and left, then lifted both horse and man from the ground.

Pepe lost his balance and fell directly upon the horns.

A nice lump of excitement this for such a blood-thirsty crowd! What matter that Josefa's shrieks at her son's peril were loud and piercing? They were set down as extravagant delight at the splendid sport. What if Lola turned pale and fell back in a dead faint? Women recover soon enough from fainting-fits: here was a man about to be gored to death under their very eyes and for their amusement.

For some twenty seconds Pepe hung thus, half way between life and death. Entangled between the horns, his body lying along the bull's back, he was beyond help from the first. A sudden paralysis seemed to have seized all those who should have swooped down to his assistance; each instant Pepe's danger increased, each instant the bull grew more and more frantic in his efforts to shake himself free. At last, with one terrible plunge he threw Pepe to the ground; struck his horns into the quivering body of his prostrate foe, lifted him on high, and then—tossed him half-a-dozen yards away, to fall a mere lump of clothes, collapsed, apparently dead.

And now a sudden awe fell upon the whole assemblage. Here in truth was a man of like passions and feelings with themselves "butchered to make a Roman holiday." There was a momentary revulsion of feeling. *Que lastima* (How sad)! was on every lip, as the attendants bore the lifeless body away. Two words of pity; no more. Is not the bull still there in the arena, charging like a fiend? Call the priest for Pepe; let the holy oil be administered if it be not already too late, but in any case bring more *picadors*. There must be accidents. It is all in the day's work. And there are still four bulls to be killed.

Naturally enough there was no little confusion in the neighborhood of Josefa and Lola. A girl fainting, and a dueña in hysterics, were sufficient to destroy Ramona's enjoyment, and put her mother, Doña Teresa, in a fever of fussiness. Nor were those seated around of much assistance. The women became talkative, chattering fast and offering all manner of impracticable suggestions, and the men growled "*caramba*," or worse, because the disturbance was spoiling their fun. The obvious thing to do was to carry Lola out. But Miguel, the only male of their party, being on a small scale and not even strong for his size, was manifestly quite unfit for the job, though he might have been willing enough to try; and Lucas, the other brother, was at the far end of the ring in utter ignorance of what had occurred.

Help came whence it was least expected. Frank Wriottesley, the hero of the sleeve-links, the protector of old Bellota some weeks before, had been watching the whole affair from his seat on the tier just above. Early in the day Lola had caught his eye, and he had found himself again and again returning to gaze upon her perfect face. When she fainted he jumped from his seat and made towards her. At first the crowd kept him back, but by dint of persistent elbowing he reached her at length; and then saying no more than "Allow me," he coolly lifted Lola in his arms and strode towards the door-way.

This forcible abduction was not taken in the best part by Doña Teresa, though it clearly solved a difficulty for her; and she followed Frank out, muttering as soon as she got breath strong expressions as to the abrupt ways of the English and their want of formality. To call him very formal, *very formal*, is the highest compliment you can pay a Spaniard.

Once beyond the ring and the crowd, Doña Teresa re-asserted her authority. Ramona and she placed themselves on each side of the inanimate girl, as she lay upon the grass, and made signs to Frank that he was no longer required. So our hero returned to the ring.

Pepe too had been carried out, but on the opposite side—that nearest the fields, where the dead horses were being skinned under the eyes of observant vultures. There upon the burned-up, blood-bedabbled grass he was laid, and there his mother made her way when the first paroxysm of grief was abated. Now she knelt at his head, gazing with fierce agony into his lack-lustre eyes and calling upon him, the dear son of her soul, the sole offspring of her maiden prime, to look up and speak to her. Inside, where the fight was still in progress, the people roared and shouted as before, and at each fresh outburst Josefa shuddered with pain and horror. There is no one to pity her;

the sky above is hard and brazen, and the birds of prey openly mock at her with hungry, bloodshot eyes and flapping wings. Only the horse-skinners, busy at their loathsome task, spare her a word of compassion. But then the *padre cura*, come to administer the last rites of the Church, touches her gently on the shoulder and bids her be of good cheer. With him is the doctor from the hospital, who bends over Pepe examining his hurts; and Josefa rouses herself to hear the worst. But he is of opinion that none of the wounds are mortal; and what are a broken rib or two, and a crushed leg to one who follows the *picador's* trade? While there is life there is hope. By and by Pepe is removed to the hospital in the town.

And now Josefa found herself in a terrible dilemma. Don Mariano had given positive instructions that she and Lola were to leave San Roque not later than seven that night; but how was she to go and leave Pepe perhaps to die alone? She was divided between her duty to her master and her newly-awakened affection for her son. If she returned to Gibraltar forthwith she might never again see that son alive. In the end, after the manner of womankind, she allowed her feelings to gain the day.

Lola had been consulted and readily agreed. She had recovered almost immediately from her fainting fit, but was by no means disposed to face the homeward journey that same evening. Moreover, she had been invited with Miguel and Ramona to the ball at the Casino—the first affair of the kind at which she had ever assisted, and which she hoped to enjoy more than the horrible bull-fight.

It was, however, considered prudent to send word to Don Mariano. He was likely otherwise, as Josefa expressed it, "to put himself into an eleven-guarded shirt," in other words, to become seriously enraged. A friend, therefore, was hunted up from among the many bound for Gibraltar that evening, and commissioned, with many entreaties, to go to Rosia and explain that Lola had met her cousins from Ximena, and at their request had stayed the night at San Roque. Josefa purposely omitted all mention of her son's accident, because she felt it might awaken Don Mariano's suspicions as to the real reason for the postponement of their return to the Rock. These matters arranged, Josefa repaired again to the hospital to spend the night by the bedside of her son.

It happened by chance that Frank Wriottesley of the Halberdiers, who, as we have seen, rendered such important service, also remained that night at San Roque. He had missed his companions, and after dining alone at M'Crae's hotel, found himself on the Alameda after dusk in the midst of the fair.

It was not bad fun he thought. There were all sorts of

games afoot. Roulette tables were plentiful, at which hardened sinners gambled away the copper *ochavos* and *cuartos* (half-farthings and farthings); the drinking booths were full, and more than one group stood round the blaze of an *alfresco* fire, in the light of which couples dance the *olé* or *habanera*, the *caña*, *sandango*, or *bolero*; while the lookers-on clapped their hands and sang in chorus. But this, the national method, was not sufficiently fashionable for the young bloods of San Roque who had erected the leafy bower, already described, for the express purpose of giving a ball of the most ambitious character. This was now in progress, with chaperones, a band (of two), ladies in white dresses, young beaux, all in due form. And here Lola, now quite well and merry as a lambkin newly introduced to spring turf and the innocent use of its legs, danced with her cousin Miguel, listening with good humor to his extravagant compliments.

"Was your father a confectioner?" he asks.

"My father? How should I know? Why?"

"Your lips are like sugar-plums—like scarlet candied drops."

"*Ea*—but they are not for you to taste, Miguelito."

"And the snows," went on Miguel, unabashed, quoting a favorite couplet, "would not fall on your brow, Lola; why should we stop, they say, where the ground is whiter than we are?"

"*Anda* (Go to)! Talk of other things."

"And the roses complain that your lips are too red; and so do the flowers of the pomegranate also."

"A blushing face is better than a black heart."

"And your eyes are bright and sharp as daggers; they will do more mischief than all the Albacete knives in the fair."

"*Calla* (Shut up)! Don't talk me over and all my points as if I were a horse."

"*Prima*," said Miguel, quoting another couplet,

'A tall pine; I cut it down.
An aloe: I take out its sting.
A fierce bull; I tame it—
But I cannot you.'

"You are right, Miguel. I answer you that, and at once, in your own way,

Si coronado viniere
Como El Santo Rey David,
Y que a mis pies pusiere
No ha de cobrar el sí.'

"Were you to come crowned like King David, to kneel at my feet, you should never gain the 'yes' from me."

"You are thinking of that English officer, Lola *mia*."

"Not I. I never saw him. I know him not. Yet was it good of him to come to my help."

"I would have carried you too, Lola *mia*, but that he stepped before—"

"Could you lift me from the ground, think you?"

"Will you let me try?"

"You had your chance. Chances are like fruit. They don't grow twice, and you must pick them when you can. But tell me, Miguelito, this English officer, was he handsome? tall, *guapo, buen mozo*? Would that I might see him once, only once!"

"Then have your wish, *prima*. Yonder he stands among the crowd outside."

"Which is he, cousin of my soul?"

"He with the dust-colored coat and *faja* (sash). Are not these English reckless in their dress? Do they not go in clothes more shabby than a beggar's rags?"

But Lola was at the moment indisposed to answer the question, for Frank had caught her eye and raised his hat in salutation, seeming thus to express his pleasure at seeing her so far recovered as to be present at the ball.

Lola colored and bent her head slightly in return. Then without noticing Miguel's disparaging remarks on Frank's personal appearance, she cried to him:

"*Anda*, Miguelito, go and ask him to come in and join us."

"And why? That I may be left out in the cold? That you may dance with him for the rest of the night? No, *por mi salud* (by my salvation), let him stay outside!"

"You're afraid to talk English to him, Miguel; that's how the water runs. So much for all your boastful talk of what you learned at school. English! you cannot speak three words."

"If I don't know English? ask—"

"Prove it then."

Ridicule overcame jealousy, and Miguel, pushing his way through the people, thus addressed Frank Wriottesley:

"Mr. English, good-bye. Do you like to enter? Will you give yourself the pleasure to walk by here? We stand diverting ourselves, and all within is at your disposition. May you live for many years!"

Frank smiled his thanks, and bowing, followed Miguel at once into the room. He had now the *entrée*, which was all he needed. Presuming on the service he had rendered Lola as an introduction, he went up to her, saying:

"May I have the pleasure?—"

"Me no spik English," said Lola, in a faltering voice, blush-

ing a rosy red; but she could not pretend to misunderstand him, just as she could not resist his invitation to dance.

The music—an old fiddle and a concertina, in the hands of two wandering Italian minstrels—was playing a galop, and in another moment Lola was, for the first time in her life, experiencing the pleasure of the poetry of very rapid motion. She had danced before this with the school-girls at the convent; as a child, too, had shared in the slow, graceful movements of a national dance among the peasant people of the mountain towns; and with Miguel, that same night, she had tried a polka and a decorous waltz or two.

What we call "fast" dances are not thoroughly appreciated in Spain, except, perhaps, in Madrid, the court and capital; and even here, an English filly, fresh from school or in her first season, could, in racing metaphor, give the best blue-blooded belle any weight and still beat her head off.

All Lola's experiences and all her dreams came up to nothing like this. Round and round, faster and faster, till her feet barely touched the ground, and she seemed to be flying through the room in her partner's arms. How long it lasted, what tune they played, what Frank said to her—all was a blank, till the last moment, when with a little sigh of pleasure, the pretty "o—e" that drops like a pearl from a Spanish girl's lips, she sank back into a seat crying, "*Yo no sé bailar* (I know not how to dance)."

For the rest of that evening Frank Wriottesley never left her side. They danced together again and again, till Miguel grew red with jealousy and rage. He would have appealed to his mother for protection, but Doña Teresa had not remained at the ball, and there was no authority present that Lola regarded in the least. Ramona enjoyed the fun, and encouraged her with many a nod and meaning wave of the fan, wishing that she could find another devoted English officer to pay her similar court.

A flirtation may be carried far even in a few hours, and without the possession of a language in common. The eyes can be made to talk far more expressively than the tongue, and without the painful aid of grammar and declensions. Frank spoke, unintelligibly, in English, but then he laughed his own cheery laugh, and looked admiringly at Lola; and Lola laughed too, replying in Spanish, but turning upon him her beautiful eyes, those soft, dreamy eyes, one flash from which was worth a king's ransom.

And thus their acquaintance began; and when they parted for the night, it was with a strong desire—not less eager in one than the other—that they might meet again, and soon.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPROULES.

FRANK thought a good deal of his adventure at San Roque next morning when he rode back to Gibraltar.

There was a cloud upon the Rock—the Levanter's night-cap—beneath which the town loomed black and gloomy, in marked contrast to the pleasant sunshine upon the scenes Frank was leaving behind. He had an engagement, too, to lunch at the Sproules', and although they had hitherto been his chief allies in the regiment, he could not conceal from himself a fear that to-day they would bore him.

When the east wind blows at Gibraltar you might buy all the inhabitants, men, women, and children, for a song. This wind—the Levanter—arrives surcharged with moisture, which it deposits like an extinguisher on the summit of the Rock in the shape of a dense, dark cloud. There is neither sun nor sky then, nor happiness for those who are in the town beneath; the streets are wet with rain that no one sees fall; every door bangs a dozen times an hour with the sudden gusts that sweep in curling eddies around the great mountain-rock; life is almost at a stand-still: Some good souls have energy enough to pray for a change of wind, but to most in this terrible Levanter bare existence alone is possible. It depresses the spirits with a languor and prostration all its own. Without the slightest cause, children, English-born, howl dismally like woe-begone curs in the moonlight; strong men, with their shirts sticking to their backs, grow irritable, and sometimes swear; while the gentler sex pine away in peevish listlessness and *ennui*.

One of them, however, Janita Sproule, as she sat near the door of the cottage to which fate and the Barrack Department had consigned her, was trying hard to fight against the influence of the weather. She sat bolt upright in her chair and fanned herself incessantly. So far as looks went, she seemed fresh enough;—a small, trim person, her slight figure clad in the neatest of stone-gray dresses, with the whitest of cuffs and collar; rather a colorless woman, the hair little deeper than flaxen, with just a shimmer of gold on each yellow tress, and her eyes, though good, of a cold china-blue.

"I look horribly washed out and faded," Mrs. Sproule had said when she last consulted her glass just an hour before. "This is the most detestable climate in the world, I think. And Mr. Wriottesley is coming to lunch—I wish to goodness he was not—I hate being seen in such a limp, feeble condition.

I only wish I was back at Chilham—just for five minutes under the trees on the lawn.”

Chilham Priory was the home from which, half-a-dozen years before, Captain Sproule had won her. She was the eldest of a large family of daughters; and her mother, on the rack lest all should hang fire, had lost no opportunity of reminding Janita that she must marry well and soon. “It all depends on how you play your cards,” were the worldly-minded old woman’s words. “With your natural advantages you ought to do well, if you are only decently careful.” The *ménage* at the Priory was conducted on principles of the strictest economy. Bare necessities were all that the stern father doled out to his family, and these were generally accompanied by gloomy references to gaol and the sheriff’s officers. But they kept a saddle-horse for Janita and made a show, before any possible suitor, of hospitality far above their means. With all this, Janita was not successful. She was already five-and-twenty, and no one had made her an offer yet. Frances, still in the school-room, though long past the age for coming out, was clamorous to begin her campaign, and she was prettier than Janita. Just then while on a visit to a neighboring garrison-town, Janita galloped straight into the affections of Anthony Sproule, taking his fancy as she would a fence, and forcing him to marry her out of hand. Perhaps Captain Sproule expected something handsome with a girl who was always so well mounted. But in this he was disappointed. She brought him nothing but her wits. Yet the marriage was not an unhappy one. Janita fell in readily with her husband’s ways, encouraging him in his sporting tastes and often helping him by her advice. More than once she had squared his betting-book and shown him a clean road out of a bad business. Sproule could look upon her as a partner in more ways than one. Then she was a good manager; the house was comfortable; she was sweet and clean to look upon; could keep a secret, and talk well upon the subjects Sproule had most at heart; and as they had no children, he found himself really better off after than before his marriage with Janita Helsham.

When Frank Wriottesley first joined the Halberdiers the Sproules had been as kind to him as lay in their power. He came from Eton and Oxford with something of a reputation; his allowance was evidently first-rate, and he meant to hunt. Sproule sold him a horse—not a bad one; and Mrs. Sproule spoke highly of his seat and hands. Frances, still unmarried, was brought down to Weedon and stayed some months with her sister, riding Frank’s horses often and using her eyes upon him with their utmost effect. But although Wriottesley was

then in the first flush of youth, he was no fool. He did not need the chaff of the mess-room to see through Mrs. Sproule's maneuvers. Frances Helsham was not to his taste either; her face wanted expression, and her figure was too large. Besides which he was entirely dependent on an uncle, Sir Hector Harrowby, whose displeasure he had no desire to brave for any girl he had yet seen. Thus, for the few years that preceded the removal of the regiment to Gibraltar, Frank had continued heart-whole, and, though friendly with the Sproules, not exactly intimate.

But at Gibraltar it was different. Here, for the first time, he missed the pleasant country-houses that had been open to him at home. Liking society, he now found quite a dearth of it. Almost the only friendly house at which he could visit was that of the Sproules, and he soon took up with them greatly. They were hospitable and kind, made him at home at the cottage and seemed glad to see him always. Sproule had been of much assistance to him in forming his stable, for Frank was fond of horses and meant to keep a string of both racers and hunters.

Nor in this matter was Madame's advice to be despised. The dealers, Gayetano, Antonio, Juan Gil, Pedro Gomez, and the rest, deferred a good deal to the judgment of the señora, who sat above in the garden like a Court of Appeal, while her husband and Frank in the road down below saw the horses show off their paces, or felt them over from head to foot with all a veterinary's skill. But patched-up screws, with rickety legs and elephantine teeth, would not go down with Mrs. Sproule. It was not enough to deck out their long tails with ribbons, or plait their manes, or throw them on their haunches by a sharp tug at the cruel Spanish bit. The rocking-horse canter, the ambling gait, the useless "passage" from side to side were quite thrown away upon her. The dealers, trained themselves in a sharp school, confessed that the English señora was more than their match; and perhaps in their private talk called her a *chalan*, a cunning old fox of a horse-coper, herself. But Frank Wriottesley benefited by all this, and so was often drawn to the Garden of Eden, as custom had quaintly christened the Sproules' picturesque home.

Now, Janita Sproule sat at the door of her cottage, a small place of three rooms only, all on the ground-floor, but with a veranda which was part and parcel of the house; and a garden that might have been included with the rest of the premises under the general roof afforded by the broad leaves and mighty branches of the gigantic *bella sombra* tree behind. It was late in the season for flowers, but one grand Bougainvillia was plastered against the white walls—still a mass of big,

beautiful deep-blue blossoms; and passion-flowers hung lovingly from the trellis-work above the door, both leaning forward as it were to enter as joint owners and occupiers of the house.

"Mr. Wriottesley!" said Mrs. Sproule. "Come in. I was afraid it was some horrid visitors, and not you."

"I'm glad I'm not included among the 'horrid'."

"You know I look upon you quite as one of ourselves."

"A *pal*, in fact."

"Well," said Mrs. Sproule, laughing, "if I used words of that sort, I'd say *pal*. But you know what I mean. Have you come to lunch?"

"Of course. You asked me."

"Not that there's much. Tough ration-beef, or mutton, rather worse."

"The mutton here is goat. They only roll it from the signal-station down the face of the Rock to make it tender."

"The treatment is not very successful then. They'd better roll it up again. But there is nothing fit to eat in this place. Do you know, Mr. Wriottesley, I begin to think Gibraltar is a mistake."

"No place can be a mistake where you get such fruit as this," said Frank, producing a big basket or bag of wicker-work, which he had bought and filled as he passed through the market-place. It contained figs, purple and green, bursting with ripeness; grapes, muscatels, tender in tone as arsenical green; gorgeous melons from Valencia, having a fragrance all their own.

"The fruit is passable. I admit that," said Mrs. Sproule. "But these figs should be iced. Did you ever eat iced figs? No? Then you don't know what their real flavor is. But there is no ice here," she went on.

"There was plenty yesterday."

"The admiral, before he went to sea this morning with the fleet, cleared out every ounce of ice in the town. It's too bad, I declare; what is life without ice this weather?"

"You look cool enough, Mrs. Sproule."

"H—m! I can't ice claret by looking at it, or the sherry you will complain of by and by at lunch."

"Sproule would be a lucky fellow if you could. You would act as a refrigerator."

"With the bottles hung round me like a necklace, I suppose!"

"But where is Tony?"

Tony was Captain Sproule's family name.

"Why, I thought he was with you! He went down to the barracks to join you after breakfast."

"I've been away. I slept at San Roque last night."

"And what took you there?"

Mrs. Sproule looked upon Frank Wriottesley rather as her own property by this time, her own special attendant; and wished to be *au fait* with all he said or did.

"Business," replied Frank, mysteriously.

"I give it up," said Mrs. Sproule after a pause. She was inclined to be snappish. "I don't care to drag information out of people like teeth. It's too hot, besides, to be inquisitive."

"I went to the bull-fight, to be sure."

Frank reserved all mention of his meeting with Lola.

"And yesterday was Sunday! Oh, you bold, bad man!"

"Who is a bold, bad man?" asked another voice; adding, "we're all miserable sinners, though, and I am the chiefest of the gang. Here's Hop-i'-my-thumb gone back in the betting for the Goodwood Cup, and I stand to lose a cracker on the race."

"Another complaint against your beautiful Rock," said Mrs. Sproule. "If you hadn't been so far off you might have got out some of your money."

"You're right, my precious!—you always are. I could lay it off fast enough if I were within reach of the village."

This was Tony Sproule. In appearance he was like his talk. He ought to have been a jockey. It was all a mistake for him to come of decent parents, and be educated like a gentleman. The Heath at Ascot or Newmarket should have been his early home. There was something limpet-like in the lightness and tenacity with which he clung to his native home—the saddle. He had a small, good figure, though his shoulders were too high and his legs too thin; but his face was unpleasant. The small black eyes were restless and wandering; and when he humped his back and drew himself together to look at you evilly from under his bushy eyebrows, he was not unlike some nasty insect ready to make a sudden spring at your throat.

"Well, but tell us about the bull-fight," said Mrs. Sproule; and Frank's thrilling description set her all agog to see one too.

"There's another to-day."

"I don't think you will like it, Mrs. Sproule."

Frank did not want the Sproules at San Roque. He wished to return there himself, but alone, to prosecute his acquaintance with Lola.

But the more he threw cold water on the scheme, the more anxious Mrs. Sproule became. "What was she to ride?" asked her husband, meaningly; and Frank could do no less than place anything in his stable at her disposal. So it came to pass that within an hour or two they were all three galloping along the beach to San Roque.

If there had ever been a time when Frank found a pleasure in Mrs. Sproule's society, it was now a thing of the past. That day, as he cantered by her side, he thought her more than uninteresting. The *petits soins* she demanded, and which at another time he might have been disposed to render, were nothing less than a positive nuisance now. At the fair she insisted upon being escorted from booth to booth, narrowly inspecting every shopman's stock in trade; while all the time Frank was burning to get away in search of Lola. Mrs. Sproule took it for granted that her cavalier was both ready and able to make bargains for her, and kept on repeating, "Ask him (the shopman) if he won't take less for this," or "Tell him I can get better any day in London for next to nothing," till Frank was quite wild, and finding it impossible to interpret, lapsed into the one-worded sentences such as, "*Mucho!*" "*Cuanto!*" "*No bono!*" which are the first simple utterances of an Englishman in Spain. "What has come over you, Mr. Wriottesley?" asked Mrs. Sproule, "you look bored to death. Is there anything on your mind?"

"He is in love," Sproule broke in, "with some of these Spanish beauties."

"Nasty, black-skinned things!" said the English lady. "I hope you have more taste."

A woman who is fair and pale-haired feels it rather an insult when men openly admire dark beauties.

"With their great staring eyes," she added, "and coarse hair. I don't believe they wash either."

Each little dig might have been intended to enhance her own good points. Her hair was soft and silky, her eyes quiet and unobtrusive; and in her habit of white piqué, fresh from the wash, she looked as spick and span as a new pin.

"There mayn't be as many bath-tubs about as there are in barracks," protested Frank; "but it's not fair to call them dirty. Look what clean linen they wear."

White shirts and petticoats scrupulously gotten up are the rage with Spaniards, male and female. On great occasions the peasant women and the lowest laborers sport linen as white as snow. The beds in the inns may be furnished with many unpleasant lodgers, but the sheets will be white and clean, and the pillow-cases have an edging of white lace. Even in a hovel a table-cloth and a napkin, coarse but clean, are provided at every meal.

"I'll make you a present of your friends, I won't say another word against them or their ways, if you promise to be in a better humor."

But Frank continued *distrail*. His eyes were wandering to

and fro among the crowd, restlessly seeking the face of his new friend. When the time for the bull-fight approached he tried hard to escape going, but Mrs. Sproule had set her heart upon it.

"You won't be able to stand it—indeed you won't," he said.

"I should just like to see the commencement."

"No lady—at least no English lady—ought to go."

"Thank you, Mr. Wriottesley; but I am perfectly well able to decide upon such a point for myself."

Mrs. Sproule was getting a little angry with her friend Frank. He was generally so ready to enter into her views. To-day he was disagreeable and contumacious.

"Besides," she added, "my husband does not object. What more need be said?"

"Sproule knows nothing about it. He has not seen the thing as I did yesterday. It's quite horrible. And you pretend to be devoted to horses, Mrs. Sproule!"

"I am fonder still of having my own way. And now, by persuading me not to go in, you only make me all the more anxious."

"If she's got her head, you must let her bolt her own way," remarked Sproule.

"Come, Mr. Wriottesley; don't let us quarrel over it. You'll go with us."

"My accompanying you is not indispensable, I suppose? You mean to go whether I join or not?"

"Most certainly. Your escort is not in the least necessary. My husband is here, thank you. He will see me through it."

"Not through all of it. But if you will excuse me, I had much rather remain outside."

Mrs. Sproule tossed her head, as much as to say he might do what he pleased, and then gathering up the skirts of her habit, went off with her husband.

Frank, left to himself, took post at the entrance of the Alameda and watched all day. But no Lola was to be seen. By the time he again met the Sproules, his temper was worse than ever. As he had prophesied, Mrs. Sproule had been unable to endure the spectacle. She came out after the first charge and confessed that Frank had been right.

"I wish I had taken your advice," she said, turning very pale. "I should like now to go straight home."

"I'm your man, my precious!" cried Sproule. "It's monstrous slow here, and I've not seen a decent horse in the fair."

"Will you come, Mr. Wriottesley? Don't let us drag you back sooner than you had intended;" adding, with something of a sneer, "doubtless there are attractions for you here."

Frank preferred to stay, of course; so his friends rode back without him, and he turned towards the Alameda once more.

Again it was crowded, and as evening drew on there was the same assemblage at the Casino as on the previous night. Frank, taking it for granted he would be welcome, walked in. Miguel was one of the first persons he met, and from him he inquired for the ladies.

"My parent Lolita" (he was speaking of his cousin and our heroine, but he was also translating literally from his own idiom) "has gone to Gibraltar back. Don Mariano, her grandfather, has put himself to choleric, more rabid than a black bull."

It was too true. Early on Monday morning an imperious mandate had come to San Roque for Lola and her dueña to return forthwith to Gibraltar. Don Mariano had waited patiently on Sunday evening for their return till the gun fired at nine, and then he knew that they must be on the wrong side of the closed gates of the fortress. There outside they must remain till morning; and taking for granted that Josefa was chiefly to blame he cursed her loudly for her carelessness. Matters were not mended much when Josefa's messenger turned up at the cottage, smelling strongly of aguardiente, and with but a confused recollection of his instructions. All that he remembered distinctly was the accident in the bull-ring, and the gossip that had gone about of the wounded *picador* being Josefa's son.

This he told Mariano; but added no word of the cousins with whom Lola was to stay the night. Josefa's excuse for remaining absent was thus unspoken, and in its absence old Bel-lota grew furious. He would discharge Josefa at once from her situation, would drive her forth from the garrison and brand her as a lying, disreputable harridan.

But he did not forget to recall them to the Rock. In obedience to this order, Lola and her dueña, the latter trembling, the former pouting and discontented, took to their *calesa* about midday, and were conveyed back just as the stream of sight-seers was bound once more to San Roque. Among others who crowded and jostled them they passed Frank Wriottesley riding with Mrs. Sproule.

Poor Lola! This was her devoted admirer of the night before, who had looked so long and lovingly into her eyes and who had gone so far to win her affections. And yet within a few hours he must have forgotten her altogether. Why else was he leaning over in his saddle and talking thus earnestly to this fair-haired Englishwoman? She was *rubia* (yellow), and so was he. Naturally this was his *gusto*, his taste, a country-woman of his own rather than a black gypsy-faced Southerner who knew no English ways and but few English words.

She was too young and too simple to be able to conceal her chagrin from Josefa. The wily dueña had heard something of

what had happened, and seeing Lola color as Frank rode by, guessed directly that it was he who had assisted her the day before.

"That *rubio*, that light-haired Englishman, do you know him, *hija?*" asked Josefa.

"Which? There are many passing."

"Am I blind, Dolorcita *mia?* are my eyes choked up like grass upon a sand-hill? I mean that tall one who rode with the English lady in the white habit."

Lola hung her head.

"Am I to tell the *señor amo* that you have made this friend? *Pues*, that was all that was needed: he will now be wild indeed."

"No, no, *querida* Josefiya; good, kind, dear Josefa; say nothing to him of this," cried Lola, leaning her head against the old woman's shoulder.

"How then? you have found a *novio* (a lover)?"

"A lover! I hate him."

For Lola had learned the meaning of jealousy. And Josefa had her secret, to be used or not, just as that astute schemer might consider likely to prove most to her own advantage.

CHAPTER VI.

"SWEETWATER FARM."

"**T**HOU marchest—this day, this hour," cried old Bellota, sternly, as the *dueña* entered the house with her charge.

There was a steep ascent up the garden walk from the road outside, and Josefa, being short-winded, was at first quite defenseless. She knew she was in for a battle royal—what is called in Spanish a "St. Quentin's day."

"Hadst no shame?" went on her master, "no shame? Thou bold, brazen woman, that I picked up from a gutter! From the fish filth in your own foul and poisonous home! *Thou* to take charge of the star of my life, of my sole and only joy; this priceless pearl, this great and rare jewel—my Lolita! Thou! *Canalla*, brigand, ostrich, *tarasca* (serpent), vile, shameless Jewess from Hottentot India! By the soul of my mother, by the life of the god Bacchus, by a thousand on horseback, it was an evil day when you first darkened my doors."

Josefa had thrown herself into a chair and was using her fan violently. Rage now conspired with fatigue to keep her silent; she could as yet say nothing in her defense, and Don Mariano's tirade ended in a long whine of fury.

Lola took up the cudgels for her dueña.

"Oye (listen), *abuelito*. Don't put yourself into a passion. What fly has stung you?"

"Be silent, child. Put not your spoon into this stew. No one gave you a candle to hold at this funeral. It is no business of yours."

"Whose then? What more? Not my business, indeed, when you have torn me from San Roque just as the fun began, when I was diverting myself enough to—"

"You should have come back last night. But I blame you not, Dolorcita; you are softer than a glove, sweeter than a stew of apples. The fault was none of yours. It belongs to this *picarona*, this great lump of evil, this Cain in cunning, this ugly witch, who must needs disobey my orders. And why? For a son she hardly knows; one who left her—no wonder either—as soon as he could walk. *Canario!* defend me from such a son. But as is the bell so is the clapper. He is of the same stick as the old tree. Apple-trees grow apples, and oyster-beds oysters, and a bad bough can only come from a rotten trunk. This one here," he cried, pointing disdainfully to Josefa, "is fit only for fire-wood. But I'll warm your soup; I'll make you eat hot garlic. I'm neither lame nor left-handed. To the old dog you must say more than *tus! tus!* Not another hour shalt thou continue under this roof. Great mountain of bad flesh, indecent Jezebel, why don't you speak? Am I to talk all day, throwing pearls before pigs, and you pointing your finger there like the clock of Pamplona, that points but never strikes?"

"Señor Don Mariano," replied Josefa at length with as much dignity as her passion would allow her to assume. "I am not a gun. I cannot go off pop; I must have time to speak."

"You shall have no longer time than is needed to pack your trunk and march. You can have no excuses that will gain my forgiveness."

"Then I need not say them. *En boca cerrada no entran moscas* (flies do not enter the shut mouth). You have neither birth nor breeding. Your words are like feathers for the wind to fly away with. They have neither weight nor meaning. I will not answer them. I am an honest woman; and I have but one son—"

"Of whom you may well be proud—proud as is the hen of her addled egg. A good-for-nothing idler, a *gasnapiro*. Like a bat—neither bird nor rat. One who ran away—"

"Other people's children have run away before now, good señor," said Josefa, slowly and with meaning.

Don Mariano understood her and instantly became livid

with passion. He could not speak; his fury both blinded and made him dumb; but he rushed at Josefa with upraised hand, as if to strike her.

"For shame, grandfather!" said Lola, quietly interposing, "you will be sorry afterwards. What has she said?"

And then it seemed to occur to Bellota that he was going too far. Possibly the desire to prevent further disclosures from Josefa—for Lola had been kept in ignorance of the causes which led to her mother's death—checked him more effectually than his granddaughter's remonstrance. But the look that he gave Josefa told her she had offended him so deeply that she might expect but little mercy at his hands.

"*Fuera!* Be off! Get out!" said the old man in a hoarse voice, and then dropped exhausted into a seat, while Josefa slunk away.

Lola had never seen him thus excited before. Brought up at a distance from him, their meetings had always been marked by soft caresses and an almost doting fondness. She had no notion that far in the depths of his nature there smoldered these fiery passions, these strong emotions, which Bellota owed not alone to his Southern blood, but also to the grievous sorrows that had shadowed his early life. Lola would have forgiven her grandfather readily enough had she guessed at the causes which had stirred his rage. It rose as suddenly as a whirlwind and as suddenly sank and died away. His first thought was for the child of his heart, who had stood the while watching him, anxious, and not a little perturbed in spirit at the new phase just revealed to her of her grandfather's character.

He guessed in a measure what was passing through her mind, for his next words were those of apology and regret.

"Forgive me, darling of my life! It is not often that the black blood is stirred, but when I am touched here," he said, pointing to his heart, "I am Mariano Bellota no more. It is the accursed fiend himself that speaks and his very spirit that prompts me. I should have killed her then had a knife been handy."

"But why, *abuelito*? She said little to vex you. Why so angry?"

"No matter. It is past." Mariano did not wish to give rise to suspicions in his granddaughter's mind. "Tell me what became of you, *Lolita de mi alma*, when this harpy went to nurse her boy? What friends did you meet with to shelter and take care of you? or did she—may the curse of Columbus consume her—carry you with her to the hospital?"

"*Nada*. Of course not. I was with my cousins."

"Your cousins!" exclaimed Don Mariano, surprised. This

was the first he had heard of the relations from Ximena.

"And which, pray?"

"Doña Teresa from Agua Dulce, and Ramona and Miguel."

"Did you meet them at the fair?"

"If I met them at the fair! *Abuelo! estas tonto.* Are you mad? Clearly we met them at the fair. Did not Josefa herself send you word that Doña Teresa and the others had come to San Roque?"

"Then it is this *malvado*, this worthless Matias Curro, who has made all the mischief. When he came last night as drunk as a rickety wheel, he said no word about cousins. He told me Josefa had found her son, a *picador*, at the fight, and that she had staid to nurse him, as he was wounded by a bull."

Perhaps Don Mariano began to be a little sorry for his hastiness. But he was not yet disposed to forgive Josefa for what she had said.

"I am glad you met them, Dolorcita,—these cousins. And you enjoyed yourself?"

"Pretty well."

"And the bulls? *Qué tal?* What were they like?"

"Don't talk of the fight, *abuelo.* *Santissima Virgen!* It makes me sick to think of it. When Pepe, poor lad, was wounded, I fainted, and they had to carry me away."

Lola did not care to mention how she had been removed from the ring.

"Little children should not go to such spectacles. They are meant for stronger stomachs."

"It was foolish of me to faint, but the sight of the blood, and the poor horses, and Pepe almost killed—how could I help it?"

"And you were very ill, light of my eyes?" inquired the old grandfather, very anxiously.

"Aunt Teresa took me to her house, and I soon got well—so well, that in the evening I went to the Casino ball."

"And you danced?"

"All night, *abuelito*; it was like heaven."

"With Miguel?"

"And with others," added Lola, feeling compelled to pay a slight passing tribute to truth.

"Shall we not know the beginning of your loves, Dolorcita? or does love like secrecy, as do the nightingales the dark?"

"Ay, *abuelo*; love is like the orange, not always sweet—there is something bitter in it too at times."

"So sad and you beginning life when hope is still quite fresh and green! Know you not the saying, 'Of love and soup, the first helping is the best'?"

"Love is like the mosquito, grandfather; it stings, raises a sore, and goes away singing."

"Hast felt the wound already, child? Was there a *pollo* (a lad) among them all who would not hold you dearer than holy water if he got the chance? You were too proud to them; I'll wager my nose on it."

"The man who wants me must come after me," said Lola, rather sadly, thinking of Frank's supposed defection. "The rivers run down to seek the sea, and so must they do who would wish to win my love. But Josefa?"

"She goes. I cannot admit such conduct. Her tongue is longer than an *alcalde's* wand of office."

Lola was tender-hearted, and she liked Josefa. Besides, the dueña had her secret, and it was well to keep good friends.

"She will not offend you thus again. And her sin—what was it? She is a mother, and could not leave her son to die."

"What know you of such feelings?"

"My heart tells me. Would you desert your child, *abuelo*, neglected, to die alone, without one loving word or friendly hand?"

"Well, well; we will see."

"That's what the blind man said, but he did not see for all that."

"Artful! you have more talk than an attorney, to gain your ends."

"She stays?"

"If you wish it, yes. But let her keep from my sight, or I may do her some mischief yet."

Nor did Lola's advocacy end here. Knowing that Josefa's heart was bound up in the welfare of the son in hospital, she gained her grandfather's permission for the dueña to remain at San Roque till Pepe was convalescent. Don Mariano consented with a bad grace, and only after Lola had agreed to spend the interval at Ximena with her cousins. She could not be left alone at Rosia Cottage, he said, and this was the only alternative. To this Lola could make no valid objections, and, after all, it suited her purpose to retire for a time to the *cortijo*. Before starting, however, she asked her grandfather, somewhat abruptly, whether he could ride on horseback.

"*Caramba!* of course."

"Is it difficult?"

"Not for young bones, before the pains and tortures of old age commence. But what—do you wish to ride too? So you shall, *querida*, but upon a *jamuça*, a pack-saddle with a chair and straps to keep you from falling."

"*Anda!* Throw that bone to some other dog. Have I not ridden thus for years, at a foot's pace and upon the back of a patient mule? No, grandfather; my desire is to mount a pure-

bred Cordoves, a steed of fire, of lineage, and race, to wear an amazona, and sit sideways like an English lady."

"You would be terrified out of your small wits."

"English ladies are not."

"They learn it young. That which is learned in the cradle lasts all one's life."

"I am no coward. What others do, I can accomplish also."

"Saddle the water-boy's donkey then, Lolita *mía*. It's better to be carried peacefully by an ass than kicked off by a horse."

But Lola, as usual, had her own way. Within a few days she started for Ximena, convoyed by Josefá, who returned next day to San Roque. Part of Lola's baggage was a second-hand side-saddle, which old Bellota had rummaged out of one of his stores. He sent word, also, to Lucas, the eldest son and managing man upon the farm, that a horse—a gentle, well-bred, lady's horse—was to be found at a moderate price, and that if possible Lola was to be taught to ride.

Why had this sudden fancy seized the girl? For no reason but that she might do as the English did; that she might, by some effort of her own, bridge over the gulf that seemed to separate her from Frank Wriottesley. All the English ladies rode on horseback; this much Lola thought she might also acquire, though she were unable to whiten her clear olive skin, and give another tinge to her lustrous purple hair: but these were not impossible feats either, had she been a little more conversant with the advantages of civilization.

Sweetwater Farm, the Cortijo de Agua Dulce, the home of Lola's cousins, lay a mile or two from the town of Ximena, and some half-dozen leagues from Gibraltar. To reach it, you passed through the whole length of the great cork-wood by a track, nothing more; and leaving the "Long Stables" on the left, came upon a wide plain extending to the very base of the hill on which Ximena stands. Most of the towns in Southern Andalucia are perched thus, like an eagle's eyrie, on a peak. They were built so for safety when Moorish or Christian foragers harried the lands around.

The herds you passed in this plain belonged mostly to Sweetwater Farm, where more business was done in raising stock than in mere husbandry. For the latter, a few fields of barley and beans and an olive grove sufficed, with several acres of vines, from which they got wine sufficient for their home consumption. The wealth at Agua Dulce was in cattle, in droves of small, wiry oxen with tremendous horns, that lolled most of the summer days in the half-dry pools of the shallow river, or followed the tinkling bells of their leaders from pasture to pasture; in

troops of brood mares with their attendant colts ; in pigs, strong little black brutes, more like wild boars, whose flesh, acorn-fed, was to be turned by and by into sweet hams and good juicy bacon. Last of all, in bulls—in big, fierce *toros*, bred for the national amphitheatre with consummate pains and infinite tests to prove their courage, endurance and animal strength. These last were herded in more retired spots, apart from the possible intrusion of irritating strangers, ranging there alone with their especial herdsmen and their companions, the *cabestros*, or tame oxen, whom they loved and trusted, only to be some day, Judas-like, by them betrayed.

Matters were carried on in a very primitive fashion at Agua Dulce. The common appliances of English farmers were still unknown in this secluded corner of a backward country. Steam plows, patent thrashing-machines, wire-fencing, and chemical manures had never hope for trial there. That which their ancestors had worked with was good enough for them—the clumsy plow, drawn at a snail's-pace by patient oxen, the water raised by a *noria* or Moorish mill-wheel, the corn trampled out by the hoofs of horses. What did they want with fences? The mountains themselves served as barriers to the plains ; and right up to their base the cattle might wander at will. Manures, patent or other, were superfluous where, under the bright sun of the South, the fertile soil teemed with richness and multiplied fiftyfold.

The *cortijo* itself was a big rambling place, capable of standing a siege. It was quite self-contained, within high walls—a small colony or fortress independent of external aid, having granaries and store-rooms, forge, bakehouse, kitchen, all inside. The stables would have held a troop of cavalry ; for which the yard or *corral* would have been a spacious exercising ground ; in the large *huerta* or orchard grew fruit-trees in abundance, in the small home garden, vegetables and any quantity of herbs suitable for medicinal purposes—an important item of produce, seeing that with concoctions of various plants Doña Teresa doctored everybody within miles. As for the house, it was roomy, bare, and rather comfortless. There was a second story, but the family from choice inhabited the ground-floor, in which the rooms were bare save for a walnut-wood cupboard here and there, and a few high-backed chairs with rush bottoms ; for carpet, a few large circular mats of *esparto* grass ; and for decoration, one or two framed oil-pictures—bad imitations of Murillo, Zurbaran, and Ribera, all of which were nevertheless chained to the walls lest in some new invasion they might be stolen, like others in the old days, and removed to France.

The chief personage at the farm was Doña Teresa Panfila Peñafior, to whom we have already been introduced, a wizened, leathery-faced old dame, not really old, being barely fifty, but people age prematurely in a land which turns lakes into salt-pans and makes raisins from juicy grapes. Her voice, sweet perhaps when her husband courted her, was sour now as an unripe pomegranate pip; and her manner was always imperious, as became the representative of several illustrious families—a *hidalg*a, the daughter of some one, with ancestors, many of them distinguished, of whom she was continually speaking, and coats of arms enough to furnish a stock in trade for half-a-dozen colleges of heralds. She was pious to a fault—in other words, bigoted, narrow-minded and superstitious. Day and night there burned a small lantern in a niche near the main entrance, which was tended by her own hand, and dedicated to the patron saint of her deceased spouse. It gave her some concern that her eldest son, Lucas, who was the real, but not the nominal, master of the farm, belonged to the more advanced school of politics, and counted it part of his creed to openly despise the religion of his forefathers, and to express the most vigorous contempt for the priests and their ceremonies, characterizing them as *cosas de mujeres*, things fit only for women.

This Lucas was of a type occasionally to be met with among the upper class of country folk in Southern Spain—coarse in mind and manner, unless he saw some advantage to be gained by being gracious, a swaggerer and a bully. At home and in the immediate neighborhood, everybody deferred to Lucas Peñafior, and when he opened his lips, no dog presumed to bark. He already lorded it over all the people of the farm as if it were his own property, whereas his mother had still a life-interest in it, and Lucas was only her overseer. The place was prosperous, yet the Peñafiors were by no means rich, and all alike had to work, except Alejandro, the second son, who was a lieutenant in a line regiment, and generally away from home. Miguel, the younger brother, was clerk and steward of accounts, a sort of slave to Lucas, who made his life a burden to him. Miguel was small and not courageous, and he thought it best to endure in silence the tyranny of his elder brother. Ramona, the only sister, shared with her mother the duties of the house, not disdaining at times to take her place at the washing-boards by the river-side, and assisting in the kitchen, or in the various operations for salting and curing bacon, preserving fruit at the proper seasons, cooking, clear-starching, and making herself generally useful. She had learned from her mother to prepare a *gaspacho* (an oil-and-water salad), or to stew a fowl with green peppers, against any cook in Southern Spain.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER MARTIAL LAW.

FRANK WRIOTTESLEY was indeed a gallant young fellow full of life and spirits, with a merry heart and a ringing voice that it did one good to hear. And such energy, such vitality as there was in the man! He was never bored, never out of sorts, never at a loss to fill his vacant hours, very keen in those field-sports to which he had been trained from his earliest youth, and in all of which he excelled; cunning, too, and clever with his fingers, ready to make you anything from a gun-case to a patent tooth-pick. In the by-season, when his hunting-coat and tops were laid on one side, and his gun lay idle, he found employment at his lathe, and littered his barrack-room with chips and shavings. A great contriver was Frank and fashioner of raw material. Nothing pleased him half so much as to be asked to devise something new—a new bit, or a new knife, or a new plan of tying up Mrs. Sproule's skirts to keep them from trailing in the mud. He was no great lover of books, although he had a well-thumbed copy of "Hawker," another of Hutchinson on dog-breaking, and knew by heart most of "Youatt on the Horse." But, as a rule, having such a superabundance of animal spirits, he had not the patience to sit still and read. He wanted to be up and doing always. Of an evening, when his day's work was finished—a long day's work, self-chosen—he wanted to go to bed, so as to be up with the lark, and begin again. So he could not afford the time for study, even if he had had the inclination. But though no bookworm, Frank had "parts," which he could exhibit if put to the push, only his nature was foreign to sedentary employment. He was essentially a man of action—one who spoke fast, and was generally in a hurry; a blithe, eager, impetuous youth, who would have had strong likes and dislikes, were he not too good-natured to hate even an enemy long. Nevertheless, this same softness of heart gave promise that when the occasion came for him to fall in love, his passion would be too ardent and overpowering to be checked by ordinary obstacles.

Frank's childhood had been spent with his father in Canada—in the far Northwest, where for many years Colonel Wriottesley commanded an important detachment. The place—Fort Garry—is even now but little known; in Frank's youth it might have been called the uttermost Thule of the earth. Here, amidst wild sports and in a semi-savage state of existence, Frank was nurtured till the time came for him to go to school. His parents parted with him—their only child—with poignant sor-

row; but the separation was so notably to Frank's advantage that his mother could not refuse to let him go to England. They never saw him again. A year later, returning homeward from Quebec, the steamship in which they had taken passage was lost at sea.

The blow fell heavily upon Frank, but it was with a thrill of pride, despite his grief, that he read how gallantly his parents had met their death—how conspicuous had been his father's efforts to save life and lessen confusion on board the sinking ship—how nobly his mother had sought to instil comfort and resignation among the terrified women who clung around her in the last awful moments. Both had refused to leave the wreck till the last, and thus delaying till it was too late, they went down with the ship. But they left to Frank a heritage of heroism which, boy like, he treasured far above a more worldly and tangible inheritance.

The orphan boy, unhappily, needed more than this to keep him alive and give him a fair start in life. In the matter of pounds, shillings and pence he was left but poorly off, and might have found himself in dire distress had not help come whence he least expected it.

His nearest relative was a certain Sir Hector Harrowby, a baronet of good estate in Essex. Sir Hector for years had been—like the Civil Service—thrown open to competition. A childless old bachelor, he made no secret of his desire to adopt any boy among his relations that might suit his fancy. There was no lack of candidates, of course—sex and relationship were the only indispensable qualifications; but it mattered little to Sir Hector whether it was his sister's son or fifteenth cousin many times removed. So long as the candidate owned some kinship and was not a girl, Sir Hector was satisfied. A girl he would not have—he professed to hate the whole female race. Tradition said that, ages before, when he was no great match, a lady of rank higher than his own had jilted him. This of itself would explain his unreasoning dislike for the whole sex, but the dislike was more fancied than real. Down in the bottom of his heart he was faithful still to the memory of his first love. In that early venture had been embarked all the wealth of his youthful affections—to be shipwrecked, though not utterly lost. To the last her image was fresh and green in his mind; for her sake he never married, missing thus disinterested affection from children of his own.

But the tender place in Sir Hector's heart was carefully covered and concealed. In the eyes of each new trembling aspirant for his favors he was all but an ogre—a terrible man impossible to please. He towered with imposing figure above the

would-be heir—already carefully prepared by home-preaching for this momentous ordeal—and frightened him into fiddle-strings long before he spoke by the hardness of his face and the stern look in his dark penetrating eyes. There was a great martinet lost in Sir Hector; he ought to have been an admiral or a general officer; and indeed it was a secret disappointment to him that his father, instead of allowing him to enter either military or naval services, had sent him to the bar before the title and family property had come to their branch. Sir Hector ruled his household with a rod of iron—everything in his house was in apple-pie order; the whole establishment went like clock-work. The servants were drilled in their duties from the day they joined by the unyielding butler—no bad lieutenant to so severe a chief. Order, discipline and punctuality reigned supreme at Grimswych Park.

When Frank came to England from Hudson's Bay, his father wrote to Sir Hector—his wife's brother—explaining that he was sending his boy to school, and that, exiled himself, he longed to find a friend for the child at home. But the appeal was lost upon Sir Hector. Just then a candidate was on probation who promised rather well. His voice was good—one of the aspirant's first duties was to read aloud to Sir Hector—and he showed great aptitude with his gun. It was not till the news of the shipwreck appeared in the papers, with the account published by the survivors of Colonel and Mrs. Wriottesley's conduct on board, that Sir Hector bethought him of the lonely orphan at Uppingham school. There was no one in favor at the moment—the last candidate had ruined his fortunes by peppering the best pointer in the coverts—and a mandate was forthwith dispatched summoning Frank to Grimswych Park.

It had come to be rather a joke at the little station where Sir Hector's guests alighted, to see the new heirs arrive—and soon afterwards depart.

"There was two here last week," the porter would remind the station-master. "They both on 'em stayed only an hour."

"Ah! but that little chap as was brought by his mother. She come back same fly. Sir Hector don't have no petticoats up there, he don't. But the young'un stayed—what? A month or more?"

"Keeper told me he peppered Ponto, and the Squire took on awful. And there was that stout lad—"

"Him as coudn't sit the kicking pony? ah! I mind him well," went on the station-master, laughing.

"And here's another on 'em," was Frank's salutation as he jumped out of the railway carriage at Grimswych.

There was a mangy terrier dog at his heels, and he had a

ferret in each pocket. Among his traps were a well-worn trout-rod and basket covered with fish scales, one or two pea-shooters, a bat, and in his hand one of those specially infernal machines called catapults, from which he at once discharged a well-aimed shot at the station-master's favorite hen.

A small Whitechapel pony-chaise was in waiting from the "Big House," as the Park was familiarly styled.

"Is that for me?" cries young Frank, vaulting nimbly over the station-railings. "All right! Here! lay hold," he added, briskly, bundling all his miscellaneous belongings into the groom's hands or on to his knees. "Bring out my box, will you, old stupid! Don't mind the rooster. Here's a bob—that'll buy you another. Now, then, off you go—sharp's the word;" and Frank was driven away in triumph, leaving the railway officials amazed.

"He's not much like the rest," said the porter, thoughtfully. "There's some spunk in him anyhow."

"He needn't have got knocking my fowls about," remarked the station-master. "But Sir Hector will bring him to his bearings pretty fast, I make no doubt. He'll be here again in a day or two—outward bound."

It was not long since Frank's great grief had fallen upon him, but he was not made to mope and moan. Besides, sorrow runs off the young like water from a duck's back. Frank was growing out of his, fast leaving it behind, as the decent black trousers were already leaving the neighborhood of his boots, and the black coat cuffs shrunk back from his strong red wrists. He had mourned his parents well and truly, but his temperament was buoyant and hopeful. He could not droop long. And now he was overflowing with spirits and keenly enjoying the new situation.

All along the road he sought for a bent, legitimate or the reverse, for his superabundant energies. His catapult was never idle; and as the trap passed rapidly through the village he saluted the by-standers with some very sharp file-firing. Then, after goading the pony to fresh efforts by raining pellets from his pea-shooter about the poor brute's ears, nothing would satisfy him but he must drive.

"Can you drive, sir?" asked the groom, respectfully, but with an accent of strong doubt.

"Can I drive! Did you ever drive a team of ten? I have—dogs—five couple, one behind the other, and a whip that would crack like a pistol. I'm all right, bless you. I don't remember, man, when I hadn't reins in my hand."

He was all right with the reins; one of his earliest lessons had been to drive a sleigh with its merry bells. But the whip was too

great a temptation for him. Not that the pony wanted it, but Frank wanted to use it. Before long they were flying along the road at a racing pace, past the park palings, through the lodge gates, up the avenue to the very hall door.

"Was you a-driving, Smithers?" asked the very decorous butler who came to answer the bell. "I see'd the cart a-comin' along the drive, and I could a-hardly believed my eyes. Sir Hector don't like his horses bucketed and the coachman'll have something to say to you before you're a much holder man."

"Don't blow him up, sir." Frank did not know to whom he was speaking; it might be Sir Hector himself, or some clerical friend of the family. "It was my fault; I haven't had the ribbons in my hands for a couple of years."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Butterfield with an air of some condescension. "Of course, if it was you, sir. Will you please to walk in, sir? I am Sir Hector's own man, sir. He desired me to show you into the library when you arrived. Johnson!" he added to a passing footman, "Mr Wriottesley's things to the blue-room, and get them unpacked. This way, sir," and then he ushered Frank across the entrance-hall to a snug room filled with books, which Sir Hector made his home.

"You'd best be quite still, sir," went on the butler, in a patronizing voice. "There's a many knickknacks and jiggerring-dandies about, and Sir Hector don't like nothing meddled nor muddled."

"All right, I don't mean to play foot-ball with the best china."

Frank's reverence was never very long-lived, and it had melted like snow in summer when he found that this pompous person was only a servant after all.

"No, sir, I suppose not," replied the butler, gravely. He was being made fun of, and this was something new. Frank's predecessors had rather cultivated Sir Hector's confidential man, and Mr. Butterfield was already prejudiced against Frank by his independence.

"Here is this day's *Times*, sir, and some new books as came last week; but Sir Hector will not be long, I don't doubt. He only went to the Home Farm."

What did Frank care for the day's *Times*? He was not yet interested in the money articles, nor the "leaders," nor the foreign intelligence. The agony column might have amused him, had he known where to look for it; but failing this, he found the newspaper dry reading. So his eyes began to wander about, then he fidgeted in his chair. How could he sit still when there was so much to stare at in the room? Books in the first place and almost in any quantity: the master of

Grimswych knew them to be better company often than living Christians. Then Sir Hector was a *dilettante* and an art collector, and the room was full of fine prints, good drawings, and articles of *vertu*—charming *chefs-d'œuvre* from the best Italian chisels, exquisite bronzes, wondrous ivory-work, and richly-carved cabinets full of costly china. Where the book-cases did not take up wall-space stood shelf upon shelf of specimens, collections entomological, ornithological, and so forth; for Sir Hector, among other pursuits, dabbled in natural history. It was these that attracted Frank most; and the *vis inertia*, so to speak, of the butler's caution having been once overcome he wandered freely from point to point with the ardor of an inexperienced sight-seer let loose in an exhibition.

In addition to these stuffed birds in the glass cases, a number stood crowning the book-shelves. They were too big mostly to be on a lower level, and being thus out of reach, they hung like forbidden fruit. It is probable that Frank would have resisted successfully had he not espied among them a fine white-headed Erne—the American Eagle, a king among birds—which he had seen once or twice before, and recognized.

To move the library ladder and run up the rungs was the matter of a moment. Frank proposed to himself to bring the bird down and examine it more closely.

He was at the top of the ladder, and had seized his prey, when some one called to him from the door:

"Well, well, upon my word, sir!"

Frank thought it was the butler returned, and replied saucily:

"All right, old cock—right as nine-pence."

"You had better come down—in point of fact, you must come down." There was rising anger in the voice, but Frank was not keen enough to detect it.

"I'm coming. Don't fret yourself. But here—catch!" cried the boy, unconcernedly, tossing down the fine specimen of the American Erne as if it had been a bundle of old rags.

"Oh, butter-fingers!" followed his first remark as a matter of course.

The astonished baronet—for it was Sir Hector himself—had let the bird slip to the ground, though he made a vain attempt to save it.

"You insolent young jackanapes, I never in all my life met your equal in effrontery. Come down, I say, this instant. I will not tolerate you in my house, not for another second, sir."

"I'm sorry, I'm sure. I did not know I was doing wrong."

Sir Hector waved him grandly on one side and said:

"Ring the bell, if you please."

The butler, when he appeared, looked curiously at Frank, as if to gather from his appearance how he had fared.

There was no misunderstanding the boy's *gauche* attitude, his red cheeks, and the way he hung his head.

"Mr. Wriottesley's portmanteau, is it unpacked?"

"It is, Sir Hector."

"Then repack it. This young gentleman will return to the station as soon as a carriage can come round. Order one. That will do."

Then turning to Frank he said, severely:

"I am not going to have my house turned upside down by every idle, mischievous young vagabond that chooses to presume on my good nature and his own bad breeding."

"I am not an idle young vagabond," said Frank, looking Sir Hector straight in the face. "If I have done any wrong I'll bear the brunt, but you shan't call me names."

"Hoity-toity! a nice way you must have been brought up. Is this the way you were taught to address your elders? Your father and mother cannot have done their duty by you."

"My father and mother are dead," cried Frank, the tears starting into his eyes. "You know that; and you'd better leave them alone—you've no right to talk of them like that, and—and—I won't let you."

Sir Hector stood above six feet, and the boy before him hardly reached to his waist. But he bowed his head accepting the rebuke, and said at once:

"I beg your pardon—I forgot."

He was beginning to relax. Other boys that had come had been so desperately afraid of him. They cowered or cringed, and he hated the one form of attention as much as the other. Here was only a mite of a boy standing up to him, contradicting him, teaching him good manners.

"But what now?" asked Sir Hector, quickly, seeing Frank pick up the bird and make towards the ladder.

"I was going to put the Erbe back in its place."

"You know its name then? How's that? Ah! I see it's marked on the pedestal."

"I've shot one before now with my own gun," said Frank, superbly, scorning his uncle's inuendo, "in the Canadian forest, with—with my father."

"You can shoot then?"

"I used to go out with—him."

Frank hated these references to the happy past.

"And you can ride?"

"There was no other way of getting about till the snow came. I had a pony of my own, and rode it almost before I could walk."

"A pony of your own? And you can shoot, and have made

a bag of your own in the Canadian forests. Do you know anything of the fauna?"

"Fauna?"

"Beasts and birds? Have you learned no Latin? Do you recognize any more of those birds there in that case?"

"I see the golden oriole, and the blue-bird, and the scarlet runner, and—"

"The Whitechapel is at the door, Sir Hector," said the butler, with an unmistakable grin.

"Send it back to the stable. Mr. Wriottesley is going to stay, I hope, for a long time."

From that time young Wriottesley took undisputed rank as Sir Hector's heir. There was no question about him, as there had been about the other candidates. He had won his position with colors flying, bold front and uncalculating courage. Sir Hector took to him in a way he had done to no one before. Charmed from the first by the lad's spirit, his liking grew into a strong attachment as Frank developed in pluck and independence of character. It pleased him to hear how forward the boy rode, and what an excellent shot he was. The future owner of Grimswych must be fit to fill the place of an English gentleman, and must excel in field-sports as became his station; and Frank, after the first trial of strength, gladly gave in to Sir Hector's whims, and sought by all the means in his power to please him. The ready submission and cheerful attachment of the one soon produced esteem and warm affection in the other.

Frank was equally popular with all the retainers at Grimswych. Mr. Butterfield, the butler, alone remained on the defensive. He looked upon Frank as an interloper, and would have been glad to have ousted him from favor; but he could not accomplish this. As time passed Frank went to Eton, then for a year to college. Just before he was twenty Sir Hector bought him a commission in a good regiment, determined not to baulk the young man, as he had himself been disappointed in the choice of a profession. Moreover, the life was that of a gentleman, and would serve to pass the years until it was time for Frank to marry and settle at Grimswych Park.

So it came to pass that Frank Wriottesley found himself at five-and-twenty in the Halberdiers at Gibraltar.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAD TO TRAVEL.

SINCE the events at San Roque already detailed, Frank' s eager energies found a fresh outlet. His ambition now was to turn Spaniard and make himself master of the language, to explore every corner near Gibraltar, first by the beaten track, then by remote road or rugged mountain path, finding sport where he could, but disposed even without that attraction to wander like some new Quixote from village to village and from town to town till he came to know thoroughly the ways of Spanish life.

There are many who, without the predisposing causes that affected Frank Wriottesley, are seized with this kind of fever. A certain romance hangs about the very name of Spain ; it is familiar to us in the pages of Le Sage, Cervantes and Washington Irving. Most of us have read Prescott, have followed Ford in his endless rambles ; we are well acquainted with Byron's " Childe Harold," and through him with Inez and the ladies of Cadiz. From Spain came the nuts we crunched in early youth, and the liquorice that blackened our devoted lips. To the young soldier, again, Spain is pre-eminently hallowed ground. It was the battlefield of our forefathers, of the men whose names form part of such glorious memories as Talavera, Salamanca, Vittoria, Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, and the Pyrenees. In more than one English home are treasured the journals of those Peninsular heroes—the ink faded, the paper yellow and tattered, like the flags under which our veterans fought—the original records these of doings which Napier has chronicled in language that will live forever. Thus the romance of history lends an additional charm to a land overflowing already with interest. To be at Gibraltar, so near to Spain, scarce a stone's-throw from Spanish sentries, on ground that some might say is Spanish still, and ours but in trust, is to find one's self within a magic circle. Close at hand, like a volume asking but to be opened, lies an exciting field—not necessarily of adventure, but filled with new and varied impressions. Five minutes will bear the traveler to the land of promise.

Frank Wriottesley threw himself with delight into the life opened for him at this new station. The passion for adventure was with him inbred, but the occasion for following the bent of his inclinations did not come to him at once. In England there had been many calls upon his time : Grimswych Park and due service to his uncle ; the shooting and hunting—all these hindered

him from seeking to travel far afield. For it was not to follow by the ordinary routes, in the smooth footsteps of summer tourists, that he pined. Chance alone was wanted to make him an African explorer or a shining light in the Alpine Club; for the first time something of this kind seemed within his reach. From the very windows of his barrack-room he could see the margins of two continents, noble hunting-grounds both, asking him but to choose between them. Across the Straits of Hercules lay Barbary, still strange to English wanderers, tempting him to be the first to tread its soil. Nearer were the Spanish sierras, coming down to the water's edge and displaying their purple beauties with a prodigal hand, showing their jagged tops and the clean-riven fissures between leading to happy valleys cradled in plenty.

The meeting with Lola was the turning-point. He was now, so to speak, mad to travel in Spain.

And first, to save himself from guides and interpreters, gaining through them only a second-hand knowledge of the country, he resolved to learn the Spanish language as fast as he could. He had no natural aptitude for languages, and he detested books. But then he was always so terribly in earnest with anything he took in hand that he grasped this difficulty with characteristic energy.

Down Horse Barrack Lane, the second door on the left hand of the furthest *patio* (court), lived a certain Geromino Ciruelas, who styled himself on the board that graced the entrance to his dwelling, *Professor de Idiomas*, Language Master to the garrison of Gibraltar. A tall, oily wretch, with fat hands, and manners as greasy as his complexion, was Geromino Ciruelas. But him from henceforth Frank made his inseparable companion. Ciruelas complained of other engagements; Frank bought them all up, and with them all the teacher's time, till the latter became his property, a sort of private chattel, like his watch or favorite alarm clock, to be set going when and how he pleased.

Frank hated books, as he did all sedentary pursuits, so he now ingeniously contrived to make Ciruelas a substitute for grammar, phrase-book and dictionary. The two took long walks together, scaling the steep fortress roads, or lounging beneath the shady avenues of the Alameda; and Frank kept his master to his work all the time. Ciruelas had to tell him first the Spanish names for everything they saw, then the simpler forms of talk; and by and by as Frank's ears grew more accustomed to the sound, to repeat whole conversations which they overheard, sometimes in the market-place, sometimes on the Old Mole, sometimes among the crowds on the Alameda on band nights, or in the streets. Frank took Ciruelas with him on guard,

keeping him busy all day till the dogs—of whom several infest every guard-room on the Rock—barked at the gibberish.

There were many drawbacks to this unintermittent companionship, but Frank was not to be set aside by trifles. Ciruelas was a presuming, underbred cad, who thought that Frank's eagerness for his society grew out of personal regard, and not at all from Frank's desire to learn Spanish. So he treated our hero with an easy familiarity for which at other times he would have been incontinently kicked down stairs. Thus he would lounge into Frank's quarters with the air of a comrade, and as this was the hot season, would rapidly divest himself of half his attire in order to be quite at ease. First went the black shoe-string that did duty for a tie, the paper collar followed, and probably the soiled brown holland coat. Sometimes Frank would find him thus in his room about early dawn, after a week of unpunctuality, stretched at full length upon the sofa, and languidly sweeping his fat fingers across the strings of a guitar.

"You are early this morning," Frank would perhaps remark in a tone of sarcasm.

"Early?" (he called it "airly"), "*Si, senor, tempranito*, a little early I am. God helps those that *madrugar*, that do the daylight trick. But you are not yet arisen? no matter" (with that air of good-natured superiority which early risers assume)—"it is no matter I can wait."

Probably Ciruelas had been keeping it up all night, and had come straight from his revels—on *azucarillas* (sugar-rolls) and water—to give Frank his lesson. At first he often sought to do his toilet ablutions at Frank's expense, water being in those days scarce and somewhat of a luxury on the Rock.* A new notion—this washing—for which he deserved congratulation; but when he brought in a tumbler to be filled with water, and announced his intention of using it as a basin, Frank was constrained to use strong language, after which Ciruelas felt insulted and washed no more.

But not the less for all his dirty ways and greasy familiarity did Frank consort with Ciruelas. They were called the Corsican brothers, and were never seen apart. Time passed thus till Frank had obtained a certain command of Spanish small-talk and was ambitious to test his knowledge. To do this and apply the necessary corrections, he insisted upon dragging Ciruelas with him into Spain. None too willingly did the Spanish teacher consent to seat himself in the saddle. His mount was a big-boned yellow steed, named *Taraxicum*, rough as a rail-

* In 1869, pure water was found in great quantities not many feet below the surface upon the north front. This is now conveyed by a system of pipes into the town, and furnishes an abundant supply.

way truck on a worn-out siding. Astride of this, Ciruelas went to his fate. At first he found the motion not unpleasant; Taraxicum walked well, with high showy action, arching his proud crest and sweeping his long tail in magnificent curves, till Ciruelas, as he ran the gauntlet of the bright glances darted through the half-closed green jealousies of the principal street, felt himself a new Cid Campeador. But once through the Spanish lines and out upon the beach, Frank was anxious to push on. Ciruelas at first lay helpless like a big barrel cast loose upon the deck of a tossing ship, the next instant rolling from side to side, dashing up against pommel and crupper, mixed up with mane, reins and stuirups, clinging where he could till all at once his hold gave way and he slipped off his horse into the foam that fringed the shore.

When he had been rescued by Frank and some passing *arrieros* from a watery grave, he resolutely set his face homewards, and refused to ride again. Next day he and Frank had words; and this first difference grew through the teacher's greed and rapacity into an open rupture. One method by which Ciruelas eked out his gains was by selling books to his pupils, chiefly novels by the prolific Fernandez y Gonzalez, not in cheap volumes, but in numbers, each with a sensational copper-plate; so that though the *entrega*—the weekly part—cost but a few pence, the total soon rose to a goodly sum. Frank of all books hated most these yellow-backed pamphlets littering his rooms; and when Ciruelas after refusing to ride, presented a long bill for this trash, Frank's anger rose, and the Spanish master was bundled out with his yellow *entregas* following him like the train of a comet.

In truth Frank felt himself strong enough by this time to be independent of his teacher. Already he contemplated travel alone; for he wished to come and go as he pleased. Moreover, when cut off from English-speaking companions, he would become more rapidly accustomed to the foreign idiom. He made his plans rather secretly therefore, obtained leave only at the last moment, and before they knew at mess that he had started, he had crossed the sands below the Queen of Spain's chair and was half way to the Venta de Rosario on the Guadiaro river, where he meant to halt the night.

His point was Granada *via* Ronda; an ascent of the Veleta or Muley Hacen in the Sierra Nevada came within the programme, and he thought of returning through Cordova and Seville. A strong, compact Spanish horse, with an ugly head but good clean legs, carried him and his saddle-bags, and when he got beyond the beaten track, sniffing for the first time the air of freedom and of change, he felt himself transported to an-

other world. Indeed, it is only to those who have traveled through Southern Spain on horseback that there is meaning in the Spanish word *caballero*—"gentleman"—the rider and owner of a horse. He ought indeed to be an open-hearted and courageous gentleman. He is brought daily into the presence of Nature's loveliest works, seen through the pure air of the lofty Sierras or the softer atmosphere of the sunny plains. His road takes him through wide pastures dotted with herds, or along narrow lanes flecked by dancing shadows, under natural arcades of wild vines, festooned with twining creepers and brightened by broad passion-flowers, honeysuckles, convolvuluses, and blush roses. Now he stumbles on the sharp, worn flints of some old paved road, or walking carefully among huge bowlders, threads some half-dried water-course breasting a waving sea of oleanders. Again winning the toilsome ascent of one of the lesser mountain ranges among the vultures and the goats, he looks down upon a boundless expanse of hills spread out like carpet at his feet. He is constantly in vigorous exercise: he spends his days in the saddle and in the open air; he sleeps the sleep of the innocent; his digestion needs no dinner-pills, his appetite no pampering. No form of active enjoyment can be compared to such traveling, and Frank Wriottesley was at length in his glory.

Of this, the first of many familiar journeys, let me pause to say a word. It was new to Frank, and may be also to many readers. For the true lover of Nature it was crowded with new sensations. First the road along the valley to Gaucin following the tortuous windings of the half dried river-bed; then going up the great hill to the town it was a wretched remnant of attempted macadamization, or old paved roadway with sharp bowlders at every step. Yet the reward gained was well worthy of the toil. All the leagues back to the Straits visible every inch, the whole space stretching out like a variegated carpet, through which runs one silver thread, the river, margined by vivid spots of yellow light, the ripening harvest, or the purple shadows of the dark-green trees. The atmosphere is clear, the sky calm, the distant sea like glass and beyond it Apes' Hill and the African mountains—so far and yet so near. All at once, as we gaze, across the summit of the peak-shaped Rock has gathered a small white cloud. The wind has gone round suddenly to the east, and the Levanter has begun. Rapidly the landscape changes; dull purples and dark iron grays succeed the azure in the sky; the clouds are ragged at the edges, a lurid light illumines the far off horizon, and a long narrow streak of choking vapor rises gradually from the sea and swallows up the African hills.

Again, the next day's ride by the high winding mountain path. Not far above you, the mountain tops; below, the valley a thousand feet down, crowded with vineyards and fruit trees; while away beyond roll range behind range dotted with white towns, each upon its own conical hill. A wild picturesque ride. Up hills, down vales, by paths misty and obscure, the sloping sides of the mountains hidden sometimes by a curtain of swift-moving cloud. Yet not a lonely road: there are other travelers—traders with horses carrying their goods; *arrieros* with long strings of donkeys, sometimes employed by others, but some times loaded with ventures of their own; now and again a pig boy driving his herd, or a man with a pair of mules, his private property, bent on business of his own. These, too, are seen in positions the most diverse, now down, down deep in the valley, next goat-like near the summit, coming like black specks across the white light of the sky.

Or Ronda itself, Ronda the unrivaled, in which are endless pictures. Every group in the street would be a study for John Philip. At every corner Murillo might have found beggar-boys for subjects after his own heart, and at intervals a glimpse of a female face of the true Spanish type of the same bright beauty as in the days when the great painter found his Madonnas. All here is beautiful. Whether where the river flows at last quiet and tranquil after its noisy career, you look up at the daring arch spanning the chasm; whether the eye wanders more at ease over the luxuriance of the foreground foliage, which almost hides the mill at the foot of the gorge; whether one watches the spray of the river tumbling over the precipice, or the gleam of intense cobalt through the openings of the arch, or the view from the old Moorish king's palace, with its details of houses in the upper town: or whether at the main approach, before passing under the ancient gateway with its coat of arms, you come across the gossips at the well.

And there was more beyond. From Ronda riding towards La Pizarra where there is a station upon the Cordova-Malaga line of rail, you traverse the pass and valley of El Burgo, renowned as one of the most magnificent prospects in Spain. As if to prepare the traveler for the wonders in store and mark the contrast, the road to El Burgo, is meager and uninteresting, a series of mountain valleys, where all is poor and bare. The cold gray rocks stare through the scanty clothing of verdure that clings hopelessly to their sides and patches of blighted corn promise but an empty harvest. There are hardly any human beings in this deserted place. One half-starved denizen of the wilds is transferring the water from a spring to a watering trough by means of a frying pan. He is an ill-starred savage,

his garments are a mass of pendulous rags, and he runs at the sight of his fellow-man. A few yards more, a short ascent, a short decline; again up, and there bursts upon the eye a miracle of grandeur and beauty—a wide deep valley like an enormous crater, whose slopes teem with richness; on one side vineyards climbing close to the mountain-tops; on the other, where the ascent is more gradual, thriving corn and barley, and upon every flat surface olive groves in long lines laid upon the lesser hills like table-cloths of curious stuff studded with little round balls.

Pages might be filled with descriptions of what Frank saw; but this is not a guide-book to Andalucia, and I have lingered only because this first journey had no little effect in developing certain traits of our hero's character. The natives by the wayside gazed at him with open-mouthed astonishment, for Frank as often as not preferred to walk, and drove his horse in front of him, like an Irishman taking his pig to the fair. At the *posadas* where he halted this horse was his first care; no hand but his made fast the headstall to its peg; he alone removed the saddle, gave out the feed and led the horse to water. Frank never thought of himself till he had washed out feet and used curry-comb and brush, generally before an amazed audience, who had never seen a horse so treated in all their lives. After that he darted off to the kitchen, where the cook would be busy shredding garlic into a pipkin, and took this job too into his own hands. He inspired respect, but it was not a little the awe that simple, ignorant people feel for those who are slightly crazed. Nothing short of madness, they thought, could tempt an Englishman, and therefore a Cræsus, to work for himself. Laziness with them meant good-breeding, and their gentlemen often went nearer starvation than was pleasant sooner than soil their hands. But here was a *caballero* who toiled like a peasant. Assuredly he must be mad. Other symptoms were diagnosed as he got further along the road. At Coin they thought him mad because he did not shudder at the danger of the Ojen Pass, a narrow gorge crowded with *mala gente*, who would have him "mouth downwards" faster than they fry eggs. Mad at Monda, on the journey home, because he stripped to bathe in the roaring *douche* beneath the halted mill-wheel; mad at Antequera, because he forced the barber into his own chair and taught him how to shave; the same at Arola, because he kissed the hostess and paid a ruinous bill, thereby illustrating the Spanish proverb that a pretty landlady is bad for the pocket. At Ronda he was mad because he showed the farrier how to shoe a horse; at Loja, because he preferred the saddle, and rode on although the railway ran side by side with the road. At Granada appeared the worst

paroxysms of lunacy. He must needs climb the snow mountains behind the town. Was it not enough for him to gaze up at them from below, as the good Granadinos had done from generation to generation?

But there was a method in this madness. When, after a month's absence, Frank got back to Gibraltar, he knew more of Spain, and its people and language, than many tourists after years of travel.

CHAPTER IX.

A SPANISH VAGABOND.

AS summer drew towards its close, Josefa's furlough at San Roque came to an end. But by this time the health of her son Pepe was nearly restored, though he was still a little weak from his hurts. His mother was therefore eager to get him some employment, something that might preserve him from a relapse into his dangerous trade, and if possible keep him by her side. Whether she could hold the vagrant fast was not so certain; for Pepe was a vagabond by profession, partly from circumstances, partly from decided inclination.

He drew breath and spent his earliest days by the shores of Gibraltar Bay in a spacious edifice built of mud and old wine-cases, with one of Huntley and Palmer's biscuit-boxes for a chimney. There are hundreds of such dwelling-places squatted around the big Rock, singly or in clusters. That belonging to Pepe's mamma—father he never knew—hung close to the skirts of Puente Mayorga, a hamlet named after the bridge hard by, which connected anywhere with nowhere, and spanned a sluggish stream, passable at all points without its aid. The hut, just above high-water mark, lay buried in heavy sand and surrounded by a small wilderness of a garden, wherein, amidst filth and fish-bones, the carcasses of dead dogs, or horses slain in the bull-ring at Algeciras or San Roque, occasionally festered and bore unsavory fruit. Behind, the sharp spikes of the ragged aloë-hedge blossomed on washing-days with bright colored clothes. One or two *saluchas*—medæval boats, with spars like the antennæ of a spider—were drawn up on the beach; for Puente Mayorga lived by the products of the sea, legal or contraband. Pepe's father had been one of these free-traders, hauling his net in by day, and running cargoes by night, till a carabiniere's bullet made him pay all back dues in person. Since then the bread-winning had fallen upon the surviving parent, the Tia Josefiya, who trudged daily into the garrison with prickly

pears or fresh sardines. Pepe, thus left much to himself, played about stark naked in company with dozens of other brats as brown-skinned and bullet-headed as himself; burrowing knee-deep in the sand, rushing in and out of the stream, or offering themselves up to the galloping Juggernauts from the Rock, who tore along the beach at sundown—a practice in which they were encouraged by their parents, since the indemnity, extorted in case of accident, would have kept Puente Mayorga in affluence for years.

Pepe was surrounded by scenes of beauty, but they made no more impression upon him, as he lay curled up on the beach, than if he had been a zoophite. The evening luster of the smooth and silent Bay was no source of pleasure to him unless it was calm enough for the porpoises to come close in shore. Still less did he care for the tender hopefulness of the early dawn; all that he knew was that he had been roused too soon, and his eyes, already bleared and gummy from the fine particles of sand with which every breeze was laden, refused to greet the rising sun with either gratitude or satisfaction.

Perhaps the only scene that distinctly affected him was the drawing in of the nets. He would sit for hours watching the men in perpetual procession walk away with the never-ending rope, till at last the heavily-laden meshes approached the sloppy shore, and then dance with yells of fiendish delight around the palpitating silver heap that spoke to him of broiled fish for supper, possibly of a handful of clammy sweet-stuff next day, when his mother should come back from the Rock after a successful sale. Perhaps, too, after nightfall, if he was not already asleep, he looked with something like awe at the great black Rock, that loomed mysterious and grand in the distant moonlight, for this was the great centre of life for Puente Mayorga, and made its influence felt by even such as Pepe Picarillo. It had gates that refused admittance to the misconducted, and buyers for his mother's fruit, mountains also of untaxed tobacco and salt, which she brought away concealed in her stockings, so that her legs seemed to suffer from elephantiasis. According as trade was good or bad upon the Rock, his mother smiled or swore; and it was held up to him as his highest hope of future reward that he might some day be taken there to see the soldiers in petticoats, the shop-fronts, and the great cannons on the walls.

Pepe grew on, heedless for most part of all beyond the hours for feeding, naked and shirtless, until he was too big for such slender apparel, and was promoted to his first suit of clothing—a cast-off red jacket from the garrison, which fitted him loosely from throat to ankle, and was so irksome generally that he would have cursed the memory of our first parents had he ever learned

certain elementary facts. Thus appareled, Pepe was bound apprentice to his first trade—that of begging for cigar-ends and half-farthings from the passers. But as fortune was dawning upon him to the tune of half a *peseta*, or four-pence, laboriously earned, his mother swooped down upon his store, transferring every copper to her private purse, and giving him in exchange a sound thrashing for his reluctance in surrendering the coin. Next day Pepe left his home and started business on his own account. At first, fearful of recapture, he fled to the recesses of the cork-wood, where he fought for his food with the acorn-eating pigs. From this, a passing turkey-seller took him to assist in driving his flock into Gibraltar. Pepe made two journeys, carefully avoiding Puente Mayorga, but on the third met his mother face to face at the inner gate of the fortress. She cut him dead; and thenceforth Pepe felt emancipated. He might have lived and died a turkey-seller, had not the inspector of markets caught him cramming sand down the throats of his live stock to increase their weight. For this act, which his master repudiated, the lad was summarily ejected from the garrison. That night he shipped on board a *salucha* trading in mysterious cargoes to the Spanish coast—a black, lateen-rigged craft which, towards sundown, crept out, with long sweeps, close in under the Rock, and then dashed on as fast as wind and tide could carry her, to make good a landing somewhere between Torre Nueva and Estepona. After a dozen prosperous voyages, Pepe bid fair to be as successful a smuggler as his father; but fate again interposed. A fast-sailing *escampavía* (revenue boat) ran in and boarded the *salucha* before they could sink the tell-tale bales.

Six months in a dungeon of the common jail at Algeciras sickened Pepe of smuggling. Discharged penniless and in rags, he was for weeks on the verge of starvation. At one time he thought of returning to his mother, like a bad farthing; but still he hung about the beach at Algeciras, picking up a job among the boats, or helping to drive the donkeys the English visitors rode to the great water-fall behind the town. Then, when fair-time came, he attached himself to Doña Eustaquia, a maker of *bunuelos*, or sweet-cakes. With his new mistress he journeyed from town to town till they reached Ronda in the heart of the Sierra. Here one night, as he lay coiled up under the canvas booth, he heard them driving in the bulls for the next day's fight. They were close at hand. He could plainly hear the bells of the *cabestros*, or tame oxen, luring the bulls on, the shouts of the herdsmen, the occasional bellow of the fierce beasts that were being driven in to their death. Pepe, true Spaniard, went forward to watch; and as he stood there it

struck him that, failing money to buy a ticket next day, he might stow himself away inside and wait concealed till the hour of the performance. As shutting up the bulls (the *encierro*) is an anxious operation needing all the care of those employed, no one noticed Pepe sneaking in. He hid himself beneath a bench and slept till morning, when his slumbers were rudely disturbed by a stout twig of green olive in the hands of the *impresario*.

"Little blackguard! How did you get in here?"

"At the *encierro*."

"Then march. Quick! *Estas?*"

"No, señor, no. I am a poor orphan, and I am *aficionado* (devoted) to bull-fights."

The idea was a good one. This ragged little wretch a patron and supporter of the sport!

"Are you ready to work?"

"*Ya lo creo* (I believe you)."

"And not afraid?"

"Not of the devil himself."

"Well, go down to the stables and help."

So Pepe was forthwith engaged to assist the purveyor of horseflesh to the ring. His new duties might have shocked a more fastidious mind. Armed with a stout stick, he belabored the tottering charger that refused to face the horns; with nimble hands he hustled back the entrails torn out in each mad onslaught, or kicked a prostrate horse on to his legs again when seemingly at the last gasp. Then, when each bull was slain, he brought the baskets of dry earth to soak up the blood that gathered in dark pools about the arena. Outside he worked with needle and thread and wads of cotton to patch up the wounds of horses not quite killed and doomed to endure the horrors of a second death. He enjoyed his life thoroughly and made great progress. Now and again he held on by the *picador's* stirrups; more than once he touched the bull's hind-quarters or his tail. By and by his zeal and energy met with their reward. One of the *toreros* (bull-fighters), pleased with his prowess, engaged him as personal attendant, and taught him all he himself knew of the trade. By degrees Pepe came to take a more prominent part in the performances, at first with the *novillos*, or young bulls, then with the "bulls of death." It was a pleasant life; money came in fast; he made enough through the summer season to keep him in idleness all the winter months. He was lucky; others came to grief, but Pepe saw the end of many a hard-fought day without a scratch. At length at San Roque his turn came, and he nearly met his death. Now, he had no great desire to resume the rôle of a *picador*, and gladly seconded his mother's efforts to get him work.

First, Josefa went to her own master. Don Mariano met her with abuse.

"What! I support the rogue! Am I so rich that I can take in every woman's son because she asks me? *Vaya!*"

"He has been ill."

"A bad son is better ill than well."

"Do not double the burden of a loaded mule. Say you will help an unfortunate mother in her distress."

"The times are hard; let every one scratch himself with his own nails. With eating and scratching the only thing is to begin."

"But, señor, give him work; take him into your service."

"Give him a chance of robbing me, you mean."

"My son is no *pillo* (thief)."

"I wouldn't take your word for it. A good-for-nothing idler, who spends his time propped against walls to keep them from falling."

"I did not think you were so stingy. It's well you're not the sun, or you would be too stingy to warm us."

"Stingy! because I will not throw away my substance upon this *pan perdido*, this lost bread, upon whom good food is wasted!"

"What fly has stung you, master? Have I not served you faithfully? Cannot you trust my recommendation?"

"A mother's swans are the worst of geese. But tell me, then, what is he good for? Can he keep accounts, and write and cipher, and speak English?"

"He never had much schooling, but he can ride and groom a horse."

"Is my stable, then, so full of horses that I want a dozen *mosos*? Have I perchance a squadron of cavalry to my own cheek? Am I the governor of this fortress, or the second chief, or one of those spendthrift officers, that I must waste my dollars on other mouths, on barley for beasts, when I have barely bread for me and my own? Groom a horse! *Caramba*, a pretty recommendation to me, who never owned a nag since I sold the gray *tordo* to feed the English fox dogs."

"The señorita Dolorcita will be coming back from Ximena soon, and she has learned to ride. You said she was to learn, and if she has a horse—"

"*Oye*, listen, woman. Dost think me a fool? Is my face as mad as a monkey's? My pearl may ride, if she likes, a dozen steeds, the best that money can buy her, but she rides with her equals, as she will mate. I want no brown-faced *moso* to make sheep's eyes at her as he lifts her into the saddle, to hang about her till perchance she forgets herself and her station. The

game is too high. Those who cannot walk had best not try to fly."

"The saints defend me, señor *mio!*" cried Josefa, crossing herself. "You're more changeable than a weather-cock or a windmill. Your tongue stings like a bee's tail."

"*Mira!* I know what I am about. Make yourself like sugar and the flies will come to eat you. I will be master in my own house. The lunatic is more powerful in his own than Solomon in anybody else's. No more. Seek another *amo* for your precious son; he comes not here. One of your family is somewhat too much for me as it is."

Josefa was crestfallen, but not yet despondent. She had another strong card to play which might turn the game to Don Mariano's disadvantage. Her intention was now to sell herself, so to speak, to the enemy.

Frank Wriottesley a day or two later was in the anteroom recounting his recent adventures, when a mess-waiter came up and whispered:

"A female, sir, below, at the door; she was wishing to speak with you."

"A female? to see me?" asked Frank, rather incautiously, aloud, thereby drawing down upon himself the attention of the whole mess.

"Don't mind us!" cried Sproule, amidst general laughter. "What is she like, Glubb?"

"A native, sir; leastways she's not a European, sir; that is, she don't speak English."

This man had been long in India, and he had got a notion that Spaniards, as foreigners, should be classed with black Asiatics.

"They didn't teach you much geography, Glubb," said Honeybun.

"Never mind, Glubb. You're not the first person who has called Spain Oriental," remarked Frank.

"Wriottesley wants to turn the subject. I vote we go with him to interview the European."

So in a body they trooped down-stairs like school-boys, some sliding by the banisters, others whooping and shouting, and hustling Frank along five steps at a time.

"Here he is, ma'am!" shouted the leading one. "He's shy, but that'll wear off. Don't mind us; we've only come to see fair play."

It was Josefa, dressed in her Sunday best, but not attractive in spite of all her finery. Yet with native dignity she put the tormentors on one side and went up to Frank, touching him playfully with her fan while she wreathed her lips into a smile, saying, in Spanish:

"*Señor de mi alma* (my soul's lord)! Of your amiability and condescension have compassion upon a miserable woman. If you would gain happiness in this life and salvation in that which is to come, if you would avoid sleepless nights in this world, and shorten, by my intercession, the hours of purgatory in the next, I pray you grant me one favor!"

Frank easily understood that Josefa wanted something, and as all she had said was so much High Dutch to the others, he replied, as far as he was able, in her own language. The others, finding the interview promised to be slow, soon sheered off.

"What can I do to help you, señora?" asked Frank.

"Sir, I have a son—a youth of ingenuous and sympathetic disposition, skilled in every art, in demeanor gracious, in temper angelic. He is tall, and—I cry your pardon—though a mother speaks, handsome as the summer flowers."

"Señora," replied Frank, rising to the occasion, "that you are most fortunate I need not say. But with such a mother, what should not the offspring be! May his future be as prosperous as his deserts seem to entitle him. It is of this excellent youth that you would now speak?"

"By your amiability, yes," cried Josefa, simpering and casting down her eyes. "This son is the star of my life, who has all that heaven can give him, save one boon alone—"

"And that is?"

"Your worship's protection."

Frank did not see his way at all clearly, and he was compelled to change his tone.

"Señora, I beg of you to speak more plainly. The sun is already on the slope and your words are as obscure as the darkness that must soon overtake us. What can I do for your son?"

"Take him—keep him. May he bring you a blessing!" said Josefa, with tears now in her eyes, as she made a present of this priceless gift to Frank.

"Pardon me, madam; you will forgive my reserve—"

People are not in the habit of giving away their children, except at a tender age, in omnibuses or on door-steps, and Frank hesitated.

"You will excuse me if I decline the gift. Of what earthly use would this interesting and amiable youth be to me?"

"Make him groom your horses and ride them! Ah, what a horseman is there!" said the mother, picturing to herself Pepe's seat and graceful bearing in the saddle.

"He is a groom then?" For the first time a light was breaking in on Frank.

"Of the best, señor ; he has not his equal in Spain."

"But I want no servant at present. I am well suited, nor do I think just now of adding to my stable."

"Señor," put in Josefa, "if I mistake me not, your worship was at San Roque at the fair?"

"Yes."

"I saw you. When would my eyes forget such manly beauty, such stout splendor of form and feature?" Flattery is a ready weapon with women of Josefa's nation and class. "I saw you from the first, but then my Pepe was hurt in the ring below, and close by my side my little mistress swooned, and I was like to go mad with fear of losing both."

"Fainted, you say? The young lady who fainted, was that the same that I myself carried out of the ring?"

"My master's granddaughter, señor—the Señorita Doña Maria de los Dolores Bellota y Peñaflo."

Frank in the months that had passed had far from forgotten Lola, but as time went by his chance of again meeting her seemed to grow more and more remote. But now, unexpectedly, he came upon the trail.

"And you?" Frank asked.

"I am Don Mariano's hands and feet, *ama de llaves*, key-mistress and custodian of Don Mariano's house, care-taker also of his pearl, the choice child of his heart, Dolorcita, the star of my life."

"Is the young lady well?"

"Fairly so, but delicate as a dove, fragile as a spray of jasmine. She dreams only of you."

As Josefa had not seen Lola since the time of the bull-fight, she made this statement quite without foundation ; nor had she the least compunction about sacrificing the child's maidenly reserve to gain her own ends.

"And where does she reside? Here, upon the Rock?" asked Frank with as unconcerned an air as he could assume.

"Señor, at Ximena : my son Pepe could point out the very spot where she is to be found."

"I understand. The road is difficult and needs a practiced guide?"

"Precisely, señor *mío* ; your worship is sharper than a bolster. A guide you must have. I offer Pepe. *¿Está usted? Is it a bargain?*"

It was ; and within a week Frank, accompanied by his new groom, was on his way to Ximena. Let us precede him and look in on the place which for a few months Lola had made her home.

Life at Agua Dulce was very tranquil, indeed, a trifle slow.

Ximena, the nearest town, was a dull place, stagnant, ruinous, off the highroad, and unfrequented. There was little employment or amusement for Lola, except to watch the flowers in the garden grow, or take a lesson from her cousin Lucas in horsemanship. This riding on a side-saddle gave mortal offense to Doña Teresa, whose conservatism would have made it penal for any one to seek to improve upon the ways of their grandmothers. Still less could she tolerate the gray riding-habit, the "Amazona," as it is called in Spanish, which Lola had brought with her from Gibraltar. As for the pantaloons and the man's hat—for our little heroine carried her imitativeness of the English ladies to the last extreme—these new-fangled notions gave Doña Teresa a *jaqueca* (headache) which lasted her for a week. The only consolation to be found in this new fancy of Lola's was that it threw her in the way of Lucas, the eldest-born and heir to the *cortijo*, for whom the little heiress would have been an unmistakable catch. Indeed, while Lola was still a child, Doña Teresa had sought to come to terms with old Bellota, endeavoring to bind him thus early to an engagement. But Don Mariano had protested that his granddaughter should choose for herself when the time should come, and would make no promise. Nevertheless, he sent Lola year after year to the farm, and was forever talking to her of her cousins, as if he wished her to take a fancy to one or other of them. So of course Lola fell in love with Frank Wriottesley.

In the day-time the members of the family did not meet much except at meals, and these were soon dispatched. It was not until towards sundown that they gathered together around the big entrance gates, over which hung their colossal coat of arms, "to take the fresh," as they called it, and talk. These evening meetings out of doors are the substitutes in Andalusia for the open air "at homes," or *tertulias*, which the grandees of Spain give upon the Prado at Madrid. The upper folk thus entertained any passing friend. Among the peasantry, the wife and daughter, mother and maidens, sit by the door to welcome home the bread-winner returning from his labor in the fields, while the little ones rush forward to get between their father's legs or scramble on his patient donkey's back. These peaceful parties are in keeping with the tranquil hour, the fading light and the growing stillness which nothing breaks but the voices of the sitters, the tinkle of a distant bell, or the monotonous chant of an *arriero* on the road, keeping time to the measured pace of his slowly-jogging mule. Then in the midst of all their talk, the deep-toned church-bell proclaims the *animas*, the evening hour of prayer for the dead. The men uncover their heads, the women tell their beads aloud, and the children pause in their play to whisper that the angels are close at hand.

The ladies of Agua Dulce, Doña Teresa, Ramona and Lola, seated on low chairs by the door-way, are hearing the day's news. Miguel has been up to the town, a mile or two distant, and has returned brimful of gossip.

"Listen, ma'am," he says to his mother, "There is good news from Alcalá. They say the barley crop has failed."

"Do you call it good news to hear that your neighbors are ruined?" asked Lola.

"*Vaya!*" Doña Teresa observed; "we must all live. Our barley here was abundant."

"One man eats sour fruit and another gets the toothache. Luck is not the same for all."

"August and harvest do not come every day, but once a year; sometimes in plenty, sometimes not at all," said Ramona.

"And, Dolorcita," went on Miguel, "there are *titeres* (acrobats) coming—Americans with an insect."

"A *bicho!* Does it sting?"

"No, *hija*: it is an elephant, and it will fight with a bull."

"Ah!" said Lola with a shudder.

"Not recovered yet!" cried Ramona. "Perchance you will again faint, and this time there may be no one by to give you succor."

At which Lola blushed, for it brought back to memory an incident and individual both of which she had tried hard to forget.

"*Mas* (more)," went on Miguel; "I saw to-day that *picador*, your dueña's son, who was injured at the last San Roque fight."

"Pepe! He is alive then and well?"

"What brings him hither?" asked the mistress. "Are we to have a *funcion* here! I had not heard of it."

"A bull-fight in this corner of the earth," cried Ramona. "Sooner would the skies rain silk handkerchiefs and silver combs."

"Of course not. Pepe has turned groom. He is servant to a señor who has come out from Gibraltar to buy horses."

"To buy horses?" cried Lucas, who with his brother Alejandro at that moment came upon the scene. "Then we can suit him here. Have I not ten *potros* (steeds) for sale; of rare pure blood, and of the finest Cordovan breed? I can fit him with what he wants as oil does spinach."

"Is he a stranger?" asked Doña Teresa.

"I did not see him; but Pepe said he was a *rico*, a man with dollars; but intelligent in horse-dealing."

"English, then, or *Gibraltareño*?"

"He speaks Castilian."

"*Ea!*" burst in Alejandro; "the Spanish they talk on the Rock would not pass at the Court of Madrid."

Alejandro had seen the world—of Spain, and was just now on leave of absence from his regiment.

Why was Lola's heart thumping against her side? The visits of horse-dealers were not uncommon at the *cortijo*, but those who generally came belonged to the lower class, this one traveled with his servant and was an Englishman. What if—?

"And did you forget to tell this Pepe to come out here with his master?" asked Lucas, with the contemptuous air he assumed always when speaking to his little brother. "You did? what more? Are you not proud of this wise son of yours, ma'am? Little idiot! not fit to take care of geese on a road," he added, between his teeth.

"Why, what matter?" put in Ramona in Miguel's defense—the women fought for the little chap as they do for all who seem weak and oppressed. "Cannot you go yourself and tell him?"

"I go, and look anxious to sell, and so depreciate my stock! Sister Ramona, you are well nigh as dense as this small lump of foolishness."

"He is as good as you, small as he is," cried Lola. "Don't mind the bully, Miguelito. I cannot understand why he is always so unkind to you."

"Why?" said Lucas, crossing over to Lola and whispering in her ear. "Because you favor him, Dolorcita, and that made me mad. Why is it you never smile on me?"

"You must mend your ways, Lucas, if you would kiss my hand," replied Lola with spirit. "I was not meant to be any man's obedient, humble slave—least of all, yours, my cousin. If you treat your brother thus, what might not I expect?"

"To be the light of my eyes, the breath of my nostrils—"

"Pouf!" interrupted Lola; "keep such talk for the damsels up yonder in the town. Don't waste your words in flattering me."

"Is it that you love some one else, Lola?" asked Lucas, fiercely. "Tell me but his name, and by the life of the holy man, I will squeeze him like a sponge."

"When the Moor has bolted a tremendous lance-thrust; much cry and little wool, Lucas. The enemies you kill I'd eat, without one clove of garlic for sauce."

"Fighting, quarreling always," said Doña Teresa. The prospect of Lucas and Lola coming together often seemed more than improbable.

"Señora," Lola cried, "he should have been a soldier, this Lucas. He was born to fight battles. Look how he conquers us women and Miguel!"

"Ah, truly!" observed Alejandro, who was fond of talking and had a long leeway to make up. "The life of John Soldier

is a king's life. He sees the world and knows how many make five. In the towns, *tertulias*, reunions, bull-fights, loves—and then the column marches, and he breaks fresh ground. To-day he is at Seville upon the Delicias, or up and down the Sierpes, making eyes at all who pass; threading the busy Zacatin upon the Vivarrambla, or by the banks of flowery Darro, just under the snow-mountains that give the Granadinas grace and crimson cheeks; out among the gardens and plenty of Valencia, through the palm-forests of Elche, in bustling Barcelona, beneath the trees upon the Rambla, at the Court itself—at Madrid, where the Queen—whom God preserve!—keeps high festival."

"Perchance also at Melilla or at Ceuta, in a *presidio*, a prison-fortress, guarding convicts—what then? Is that so joyful?"

"Ay, there too. We hunt the wild boar and sally forth to beard the Moorish warriors as did Los Reyes, the Kings of Aragon and Castille."

"Have you slain many boars?"

"Thousands!"—the truth being that Alejandro, when quartered upon the rocky peninsula of Ceuta, had never stirred forth beyond the gate of the little fortress-town. To mount guard, play dominoes and make paper cigarettes had fully occupied all his time.

"And you had a new *novia* (love) in every town?" asked Miguel, wishing such luck was his.

"Yes. Loves more stormy than the wintry seas. In Murcia, a duel to the death; in Zaragossa, quarrels to make my hair turn gray; in Toledo I jumped from a balcony higher than the belfry of our holy church—"

"Son, you might spare us these experiences," said Doña Teresa, primly. "Such tales would suit the barrack best, or the *corps de garde*."

"It is a wonder you are here to speak of them," Lola said, with a mischievous gleam in her eyes. "Such hair-breadth escapades, such harrowings of the heart."

"*Sí, señora*, you may well show wonder. In that last affair I was truly near my death. But," looking round for admiration, "I carry her memory, her picture engraven here," as he pointed to his watch pocket, "and this token of her unalterable affection;" whereupon he produced a dirty rag of a pocket-handkerchief and kissed it devoutly. "It has never left me; day and night I wear it. It is months, years since we met, and still—"

"It looks as if it had better go to the wash," said Lola. "Can't you trust it to a laundress?"

"I have washed it with my tears," went on Alejandro.

"You must have had your eyes filled with dust and wept

mud," said Lucas. "Who is this precious dame? Has she a portion enough to gain you your license to marry?"

"She is penniless, but of angelic form and virgin beauty. Her father keeps a glove-shop in Cordova. I am ready to die for her, and for my country, like every true and loyal Spaniard."

"I believe you," said Lucas, in a sneering tone. He was jealous of his younger brother, and owed him more than one bad turn. "Fine patriots, you and the rest of your cloth, that suck the best blood of this misgoverned, impoverished land. Where are your glories gained? Against one another, with your cursed insurrections and mutinies playing into bad men's hands. The enemy you fight are your own comrades, or the poor misguided people that you massacre to serve the ends of the monster in power."

"We are for the cause of order always."

"Never, unless it suits you. You are only for gambling and idleness, until some scheming revolutionist or pretender to power comes and tampers with you, and then you scheme too, and lead on your men—not to their duty, but to fight for some blood-stained butcher like Narvaez or O'Donnel. If this be your patriotism—"

"Heavens above!" cried Doña Teresa, turning pale with fright; "can I believe my ears? To use such language in these days! Do you value your throat? or is Agua Dulce so tame that you pine for the Phillipines or the Canaries? These ages past have we been loyal all: in our family have been many high officials. My mother's brother was fiscal to the Judge of Segovia; your grandfather was customs collector in Cuba; your uncle, administrator of waste lands in La Mancha. We are honored people, and I pray God my sons may never mix in low intrigues or lend themselves to plots against the Queen, the constitution, and—"

"The priests, you'd better add, madam," went on Lucas. "Your friends, the priests, who keep you in the straight path to heaven, and who will gladly lend a hand to save Alejandro from perdition here and hereafter."

Lucas was country-bred and coarse, but he was keen-witted enough to see the ills from which Spain suffered. But, like every Spaniard not himself in power, he attributed all to the existing régime. His panacea was a change of government. He forgot that change had followed change a dozen times already, but in spite of all, the condition of the country remained the same.

But his violent outburst was unexpected, and rather chilled his audience.

The family talked little afterwards, and soon entering the house, partook of a frugal supper, then separated for the night.

CHAPTER X.

SPANISH COURTSHIP.

EARLY next morning they came to Lola and told her that Pepe, Josefa's son, was at the farm, and wished to see her. He had already arranged with Don Lucas to bring Frank out later in the day.

"Señorita, I lay myself at your feet," exclaimed Pepe with a low obeisance to Lola. "My mother bid me come to present her respectful wishes for your health and happiness."

"I am glad to hear you are strong and well, Pepe. And your mother? she has left San Roque?"

"She has returned to the dwelling of the good man that gives her bread."

"Are there no news yonder on the big Rock?"

"None; all is as dull as ditch-water."

"And you are traveling now from town to town in search of horses, my cousin tells me."

"The master that I serve is a *milor*, an English prince, whose gold flows from his purse fast as the water oozes from a rocky spring. He is in search of horseflesh—yes; but of yet more." Pepe looked round cautiously, as if he dreaded to be overheard. "He has come to find the true queen of his life, the rare flower whose fragrance shall preserve him from despair and death."

Pepe inherited his hyperbole from his mother.

Lola was taken aback, and shrunk from the man who spoke in such familiar terms.

"Am I indiscreet? Forgive me, señorita; but he has come—under my guidance—for one purpose alone—to see you."

"I cannot see him—I do not know him. Who is he?"

"The hero of the ring—that English officer who rescued your precious person when life threatened to become extinct. Shall I bring him this way?" went on Pepe, seeing Lola did not answer. "It will be easy to frame an excuse. Are there not at Agua Dulce horses unequaled this side of Jaen or Antequera? He shall come this very day to see them."

Lola, with the fine feeling natural to her, instinctively disliked the idea of making any appointment to meet Frank Wriottesley. Whether she would have resisted a personal appeal was not so certain, but she was positive in her refusal to accept Pepe's con-
vance or help.

"If your master desires to see my cousin's stock, you need not ask my leave. Give your message straight to the *aperador* (the groom of the stables), or to Don Lucas himself."

"But it is you, and you only, that he longs to see."

"*Citas* (appointments) of such kind are not made by my mother's daughter. *Hijo!* march—go elsewhere. I walk too high to stoop to such baseness." And with that Lola gave a magnificent sweep with her fan towards the outer gate of the *cortijo*, thus letting Pepe plainly understand that he might disappear as soon as he pleased.

Rather disconcerted, he retraced his steps to the *posada*, where he found Frank waiting.

"Have you spoken to her?"

"*Sí*, señor, certainly."

"And she will see me?"

"Of course. You are more than a bundle of straw in her eyes. Of course she will see you."

"When and how?"

Pepe had prepared his story.

"We are to go there again about noon to see the horses. And, señor, you might do much worse. There is one among them fit for a prince. The *amo* himself rides it, and will hardly sell under a high figure—a horse of race, a half-bred barb, that flies faster than the swallow southward. Ah, he is a beauty!"

"But the young lady?"

"Yes, sir, yes. Such a horse! such a horse!"

"When and how can I see her?"

"When you please, and where you like."

"Alone?"

"No; Don Lucas himself will show it."

"It? Idiot!"

"The horse! the horse!"

The more Frank pressed for specific news of Lola, the more Pepe prevaricated and begged the question. So Frank was glad to go out to Agua Dulce in person, to try his luck for himself.

At the time fixed he rode to the farm, Pepe behind him. Lucas and Alejandro met them a little beyond the farm buildings, and as they interchanged salutations, Pepe whispered to his master:

"That is the horse, the dark chestnut which the *amo* rides. The Bat, *El Murcielago*, they call him. Look, señor; was there ever perfection such as this? See how he steps; and his tail, it is long and fine as a maiden's hair; and how noble, how amiable is his temper. See, you might ride him with a silver thread."

At this moment Lucas, with the love of display that is not uncommon among strangers, was performing a few second-hand *mancege* tricks—circling, reversing, caracoling, twisting his horse in and out, as if it were a sort of machine to be shown off by the regular movement of its wheels and working gear.

But although the "Bat" was thus decked out for inspection, it was easy to see the horse's good points beneath the nondescript wrappings that marred his beauty. For all the rusty bridle with its dangling tassels of red and yellow worsted, the square Spanish saddle covered by a strip of sheepskin that hung as low as the dirty stirrup-irons, the ribbons that plentifully adorned his mane and tail, Frank knew that this was as good a bit of stuff as he had yet seen in the country;—a low-built horse, clean and firm in the flanks, of great girth, with a splendid crest and beautiful legs. The head, well put on, and perfect of its kind, proved blood, and the whole form gave promise of speed.

There was a good deal of flourish about the introduction. Lucas launched out in the usual high-strained compliments and assurances of devotion. He was Frank's secure servant to be commanded to the death; all that was in the farm or that Lucas owned in this world was unreservedly and unhesitatingly at Frank's disposal, yet no one would have been more surprised than Lucas if he had been asked to part even with the end of his cigarette.

Frank replied in due form, and said (which was mere invention) that Don Lucas's reputation had reached him in England as a high-bred *caballero*, whose gentlemanliness was unequaled in southern Spain.

"And your horses, señor—I am told they are of surpassing excellence."

"I have a few *potros*, but they are valueless; were it not so I would offer them to you. It would be but an empty compliment to present that which is worthless to a noble señor of such consideration and merit."

"*Nada*," replied Frank, not to be outdone, "I could not deprive you of your great treasures, and such they are I know well—jewels."

"Diamonds that have mouths, who would buy them? So runs the proverb."

"Will you open the casket and let me see them? If there be many such as that you ride, your stock would be worth more than a sack of withered fruit."

"Yes, it is a pretty beast—pretty, but no more. I ride it mostly myself."

"You would not sell it, then?"

"Oh, no; it is yours for nothing if you wish."

Frank knew what this meant. Between the declaration it was not for sale, its offer as a gift, and the first preposterous price which Don Lucas would fix after many entreaties, there would be very wide intervals, requiring several hours of hard bargaining.

Meanwhile Alejandro had ranged up alongside the servant, and sought with natural inquisitiveness to pump him. Pepe was not averse to being cross-questioned; it gave him an opening for enlarging upon the wealth and high qualities of his master, some of which would doubtless illumine the man also—with reflected light.

Was Frank rich? Yes, as the Archbishop of Toledo. Of high lineage? His relatives were of the bluest blood in London; and owned there a palace which covered more acres than the Escorial. In what did he chiefly occupy himself? In travel and the chase of fierce beasts; he had a magazine of weapons, such as would shame the Royal Armory at Madrid. But when Pepe, pressed hard, confessed that Frank was a subaltern in one of the regiments that garrisoned the Rock, Alejandro lost some of the transcendent respect which he was at first disposed to bestow upon the splendid stranger. To Alejandro's mind there was an utter inability to connect anything superb with the position of a simple soldier lieutenant, such as he was himself. Spanish subalterns live on a pittance that forbids much outlay beyond shirt-cuffs and wax for their mustaches.

And so they rode on. Lucas had told Frank that, in expectation of his visit, a few colts had been brought in from the pastures where they grazed to the *corral* of the farm and here they waited the English gentleman's disposal. This, to Frank's delight, meant the entire run to the house. Surely he must meet Lola now. As they got nearer the house the path narrowed—it was a mere track at best—and crossed a grip full of stagnant water. Lucas had ridden on ahead, and Frank, who followed, to avoid a muddy crossing, put his horse at the open drain, and hopped over it like a bird. Alejandro was in ecstasies.

"The gentleman is in the cavalry?" he said. "No? Not in the cavalry, but in the military service surely?"

Frank said he was an infantry officer.

"And you can ride like that! But you learned in the hippodromo—in the riding-school, of course. No? It is a marvel—a marvel unequalled since Adam sinned. Ah!" he added, anxious to do something for the credit of his native land, shamed, as it were, by the horsemanship of this stranger, "but you should have seen Juan Picador de los Rios of the Seventh Castillejos regiment of horse—what a rider was there! Along the streets, over the wide plains, and jumps and races of horse-jockeys—pouf! Señor, he was the delight of all Spain, Ah! if you had but known Juan."

Frank regretted that he had not been so fortunate.

After this Alejandro asked many questions, turning all of them

upon the military profession. His uniform, why did not Frank wear it? It was not usual, Frank said, upon a journey, or indeed at all, except when really performing duty. Alejandro was astonished.

"I never take mine off. I am always thus, clothed and ready, my sword by my side, and revolver loaded. I could take the field, if need were, now, at this very instant."

Frank, not well up in Spanish politics, was somewhat surprised, wondering what foes were dreaded. Was invasion an hourly bugbear in Spain, as it sometimes is in our own "highly favored" land?

Alejandro explained that matters were somewhat ticklish up above—at Madrid, that is to say; and at any moment he, Alejandro Peñafor, might be called to contribute towards the overthrow of an insurrection, or the elevation of a new dynasty.

"And you wear for gala-dress a coat of red?" he went on.

"Yes; red is our color."

"Ah! so I have heard. There were some few of your troops here, I think, in our War of Independence, when we drove Napoleon out of Spain?"

Frank replied that he believed a tradition to that effect existed, and that an English general, Wellington, was much mixed up in the affair.

"His name I do not remember to have heard—he is not mentioned in our histories. But there were some English soldiers here I know—and Portuguese; my grandfather saw them. He was with Castaños in the Pyrenees."

But now they were at the *cortijo*, and the stud was already drawn up for inspection in the inner yard. One or two farm-helpers were about, to bring up horse after horse, over each of which Lucas expatiated with a stream of eulogy worthy a better object. Frank listened with patience; he was in no hurry to conclude the bargain, for every minute gained brought him nearer the chance of meeting Lola. But every horse was seen, and as yet he got no sign. So he bought one, a strong cob, that would do for the winter's hunting, and began to question Lucas about the Bat.

The horse was not for sale. Nothing would induce his owner to part with him. Frank persisted, but Lucas said the horse was too great a treasure. He was of the purest blood; the Sultan of Morocco had no better in all his stables. Indeed, he was bred from a barb in the Queen's stables which she had received straight from the Moorish Court, and his dam was a mare of Cordova, owned by Don Francisco Gutierrez Gonsalvo de Cordova, lineal heir to the "Great Captain" himself. "This horse," said Lucas, "was very dear to him." "And would be

to me," thought Frank, when, by and by, Lucas, pressed hard, said he would take seventy-five ounces for him—seventy-five *onzas*, doubloons, royal pieces of gold, each as big as a warming-pan.

The sum meant about £250 English, and was a preposterous price.

"I will not deprive you of your treasure," said Frank. "Money is not yet a drug where I come from, and for seventy-five doubloons I might buy an elephant."

Spaniards cannot understand chaff.

"If the señor wants an elephant, there will be one here with the show next week. I thought he was a *caballero*, a *horseman*," replied Lucas, looking black.

Frank had no notion of being put down, and, though an angry answer rose to his lips, he said nothing, but going towards his horse, quietly remounted and prepared to leave the place. Alejandro came forward to shake hands and say good-bye. "Till we meet again," said Frank; then waving a short farewell to Lucas, who bade him God-speed, after the manner of the country, Frank Wriottesley rode away.

But as he went out under the great gateway, he looked back and saw a little hand thrust through a lattice, waving a fan both in recognition and adieu.

Lucas, left to himself, was furious at the chance he had lost. Nor did Pepe, who lingered behind to take charge of Frank's other purchase, soothe him much with the first words he spoke.

"You opened your mouth too wide, Señor Don Lucas."

"Too wide, *tanante* (rascal)? How can one swallow a big morsel else? I saw the Englishman liked the horse. It fitted his eye. If he wants it he must pay the price."

"Not that price; it is too much."

"Is the horse mine or yours, *pilllo* (thief)? Stick not your spoon into my broth."

"My master is not a fool. He knows a horse from a haystack."

"Nor am I a fool—more that God made me; not so far as men would wish me to be. I am not the man to tune bagpipes—I like to play my own music. I know how many turns a key makes."

"When cakes are scarce, brown bread should suffice," said Pepe, sententiously. "If you can't get your own price, you'll have to take his."

"Neither his price, nor your hairy tongue will I admit. You have more talk than an attorney, and I less patience. *Anda*, hook it, or I shall treat you to a yard or two of stick."

Whereat Pepe in alarm quickly retreated. But he was hardly

gone before Lucas repented him of his hastiness. He had no real desire to close the transaction, knowing perfectly that with half the price demanded he would be well paid for the Bat. The question was how to re-open communications with Frank.

After much thought, he resolved to send Miguel into the town to make overtures.

"Shall we go also?" asked Ramona of Lola when alone with her after dinner.

"And why?"

"You did not see him—the *rubio*—the English youth. I did, and he me. He looked up as he rode away; I waved my fan, and he kissed his hand. I would gladly meet him again."

Lola was puzzled. Did Ramona know more than she pretended? Had she recognized the officer they had met in the fair, or was she only eager to strike up an acquaintance with the stranger? Then came a flash of jealousy. What if Ramona and Frank understood each other? What if they were old friends already? A cold chill struck her, and she was utterly miserable.

"Well, what say you?" went on Ramona, pressing for an answer.

"It would me unmaidenly." Lola was struggling with herself. She was anxious, very anxious, to speak to Frank again; but to go thus in search of him! Her modesty shuddered at the bare thought. "Besides," she went on, "Doña Teresa would not suffer it."

"Madam my mother would never know. We should go to Ximena to buy stores—there is much that we require from the town."

"It will be so deceitful."

"Oh, pigeon without gall! you are too sensitive to live."

"My grandfather—your mother, if she discovered—would they not be enraged?"

"Were they never young themselves, that they would deny us the sunlight wherein to flap our wings? Ours is the season for *noviaje*, for love-making. Old age creeps on fast enough; *el muerto al hoyo, y el vivo al bollo* (the dead to the grave, the living to eat cake). Let us make the most of our time. But why waste words? If you will not come, then will I go alone."

This was worse than ever. How could Lola suffer Ramona out of her sight?

"I like these *rubios*—as you do, *hija*, I think, unless you have forgotten already yonder light-haired foreigner that we met at the fair. Have you then found some other lover? A *rey muerto rey puesto* (one king dead, the next king crowned)."

Lola was terribly perplexed. On one side, her sense of pro-

priety restrained her, on the other she was egged on by a strange fear lest Ramona should supplant her. For some time she vacillated. Was it strange that in the end she gave in? To remain behind would be to surrender all her hopes—hopes newly fledged since Pepe had come calling himself Frank's ambassador, and proving that he still bore her in mind.

Lucas, by way of encouragement, had described Frank to Miguel as a fierce-tempered, cross-grained brute, who would give him "*muy mal rato* (a very bad time)." The little man was delighted therefore to find in Wriottesley an old acquaintance.

Their business was soon concluded; Frank readily offered fifty doubloons for the Bat, on certain conditions which Miguel was to convey to his brother. After which Miguel said:

"I must now return to the ladies—my sister and Dolorcita—the little cousin to whom you were so kind, señor Englishman; they await me at the house of a friend in the lower town."

"I should be glad to renew my acquaintance," said Frank, eagerly, adding, without waiting for permission, "I will accompany you."

Miguel was not over-pleased, yet he could not refuse. There was every reason for keeping on good terms with Frank, at least until the sale of the Bat was completed. Any failure in the negotiations Lucas would certainly visit upon his little brother.

Ramona and Lola had left the house before the others arrived, and were seated on a bench under the trees that edged a narrow strip of gravel path which passed in Ximena for the Alameda or public walk of the town.

Frank bowed to Ramona, and held out his hand to Lola, who, blushing vividly, said, "How do do?" in her broken English, but with her eyes fixed upon the ground.

Ramona, seeing her mistake, was at first disposed to be annoyed. On a closer view she recognized Frank, and remembered him as the man who had paid her cousin so much attention at the ball. Yet it was clear that this meeting had been none of Lola's making, and after a short struggle Ramona forgave her.

Frank had laid himself, figuratively, at the feet of the ladies, with an offer to kiss their shoes, which act of homage gave him rank at once as a high bred *caballero*.

"How well you speak our language," said Ramona. "Since when have you learned it?"

"Since I was at San Roque. I had strong reasons for wishing to know it."

"A marvel! to learn Castilian in a few short months, and speak it now as only the *Madridiños* can!" cried Ramona.

Lola said nothing. She was wondering whether she knew the real reason which had induced Frank Wriottesley to study Spanish.

"I wished to travel, to become thoroughly acquainted with Spain, to learn all your manners and customs."

"And you have done so?" asked Miguel.

"I have visited the chief cities, Seville, Granada, Malaga, Cadiz."

"And yet you waste time in this wretched corner! Surely some great attraction must have led you hither?" went on Ramona, looking mischievously at Lola.

"Possibly," replied Frank.

"To ask what would perhaps be indiscreet," said Ramona.

"The secret is not my own. Besides, I think I was mistaken, and I begin to wish I had stayed away."

Lola had listened in silence but with a beating heart. There was no mistaking Frank's meaning, however, as he spoke the last words; but what could she say? only the merest commonplace.

"It grows late; we should be returning;" and Frank, like most men, blind to the real state of affairs, began to be very down-hearted.

"*Anda!* Dolorcita of my heart," whispered Ramona, "you do not deserve a *novio*. Have you no tongue? no words of welcome for this youth who has come so far to see you? Leave him then to me!"

"*Bien* (well), as you please. Come, Miguel," said Lola, briskly, "*a casa*: home!" and with that she rose and walked quickly away.

Some one followed her as fast. Not Miguel, but Frank, who said when he had caught up with her:

"You are not angry, *señorita*?"

"Oh, no! why should I be?"

"I had looked forward so much to meeting you again."

"Yes?"

"And you?"

"I had almost forgotten." She was picking to pieces the flower she had carried in her waistband.

"You left San Roque so suddenly. I went back—"

"I saw you riding with an English lady, fair and beautiful as a star."

"The wife of a brother officer. Her husband rode with us also. Did you not see him?"

"Tell me," said Lola without heeding his question, "Englishwomen are all *rubias*, light-haired and white like she is?" and as she spoke for the first time she raised her eyes and looked at him.

"Some are red as carrots, others black as sloes. There are few who can compare with the beauties of Southern Spain. They have not eyes which pierce like flames."

"You have learned then to flatter, Señor Don—"

"Francisco!" and she repeated the name.

"And you, señorita, what is your *gracia*?"

"Dolores!" in a low voice.

"No more?"

"My friends call me Lola, sometimes Lolita."

"And may I?"

"Are you a friend, Don Francisco? I have only seen you once before, and that was long, long ago. It is many months since the fair."

"It will not be fault of mine if we do not soon meet again. Do you remain here long?"

"Probably not. My grandfather wishes me to return to Gibraltar before the winter."

"There are others there perhaps who wish the same."

"No, señor, I have no *novios*."

"Then the young fellows there have no eyes?"

"I have seen none amongst them," cried Lola, with great disdain, "that I would care to favor."

"You are to hard to please."

"*Los gustos son como panderos*—Tastes are like tambourines, not all alike."

"I shall know when you return to the Rock."

"How?"

"Josefa! I took Pepe as groom only to oblige her."

"Perhaps I shall tell my grandfather, and I shall get a new *dueña*."

"No matter; I should find you, as I have just now. But I have had to hunt long both high and low. Who would have guessed that you were hidden here like a grain of gold among a heap of rocks?"

"Those knew who had a right to know," said Lola, coquetishly.

"And I am not one? Some day you will talk differently perhaps."

"When, then?"

"By and by!"

"Those who start along By-and-by Street some day reach 'Never' Square."

"Never is a long day; yet I wish we might never reach the *cortijo*, which is now so near."

They were still some distance ahead of Miguel and Ramona, and were entering the narrow lane hedged with aloes and prickly pears which led straight to the farm.

"Tell me, Don Francisco," said Lola, suddenly; "you said you had reasons for learning Spanish. What were they?"

"I will tell you on one condition. Do you agree?"

"*A ver!* Let us see."

"Will you tell me whether there is a *reja* at Agua Dulce?"

Lola looked down with flushed cheeks. Frank's question meant that he wished to prosecute his suit in the true Spanish fashion, coming after dark with guitar in hand, shrouded in a long cloak, to exchange soft whispers through the iron bars with the girl of his heart.

"You go on too fast, Don Francisco," said Lola, at length,

"May I hope?"

"Such idle hopes are like thistles—fit only for donkeys' food."

"Then must I go back as I have come? *Adios, señorita.* My pains then were wasted. You know I learned Spanish—"

"Yes?"

"Only to talk to you."

A blush rose to our heroine's cheek, but it was one of delight. She did not pause to consider whether this bold statement of Frank's would bear the test of inquiry, but accepted it as a sort of clenching argument in proof of the truth of his attachment. She felt she had found her mate, and her heart like a child's, straightway went out to this man, and she loved him, as she thought, at once and forever.

Soon came adieus. The ladies entered the house, while Frank with Miguel went in search of Lucas, who was somewhere about the farm. A short colloquy followed. Frank was ready to give fifty doubloons for the Bat, but wished to try him first; and as Lucas peremptorily refused to send the horse into the Rock, it was arranged that Frank should return another day with a friend, and then give a final answer.

He saw nothing more of Lola that night, although he lingered about the house long after night-fall. There were several windows opening to the front, but not a sign of life in any of them. After all, Lola had made no promise to appear, and Frank, if somewhat disappointed, found that his respect for her was increased by her reluctance to meet him clandestinely at the *reja* after dark.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BAT.

NEXT day Frank returned to Gibraltar in search of Sproule. He wanted his advice about the Bat.

"All right, my pippin!" cried Sproule. "I'm with you. If he's what you describe, he'll help us to spoil the Egyptians."

It was agreed that they should ride out together, taking with them Mountebank, an old English "plater," which Sproule had brought out with him to Gibraltar as a little turf speculation, but which had not been as yet of much use to him. Now he might give them a line as to the Bat's real speed.

But Mrs. Sproule, when, as in duty bound, the men propounded the scheme to her, protested against being left out of it.

"After all I've done for you, Mr. Wriottesley, I do call it shabby."

"But it's a forty-mile ride."

"As if I couldn't ride forty miles!"

"We know you could, my precious!" said Sproule; "but we thought of spending the night at Ximena. The pace may be a trifle fast at the trial, and the horses had better rest before we bring them back to the Rock."

"All the better. I should like to see something of the place."

"You'd never be able to stand it," went on Frank.

"Isn't there an hotel?"

Frank laughed aloud.

"There's a *posada*, where the sitting-room is in the stable, and the best bedroom has no windows."

"It won't matter for one night. Besides, perhaps, those Spanish people will put us up."

Frank did not think this very probable. Hospitality to such an extent is not much practiced, as he knew, in Southern Spain. But he could not talk Mrs. Sproule out of her desire to go to Ximena, and accordingly, one bright October morning, the trio started for Spain. Cantering gayly across the grass upon the Neutral Ground, they soon reached the sentries at the Spanish Lines. Here at once Mrs. Sproule got into trouble. A brace of *carabineros*, or custom-house officials, came up as soon as our travelers touched Spanish soil, and insisted upon examining their luggage. None of them had more than they carried in wallets and saddle-bags on their horses—toilet necessaries and wearing apparel—nothing more. This Mrs. Sproule declared loudly, and in the purest English, but all to no purpose. The

more she protested, the more suspicious became the searchers. One man held her horse while the other, firm in the execution of his duty, rifled her wallets. All went on peaceably enough for a time, till the searcher came across a piece of scented soap. He was puzzled. With soap in any shape he was but slightly acquainted; stuff of this sort was something entirely new and surprising. He smelled it, tasted it, chewed it, and eventually put it into his pocket. The mysterious article was unmistakably contraband.

"The ruffian! He has stolen my soap," cried Mrs. Sproule in an angry voice, pointing at the man with her whip. "Mr. Wriottesley, do come and help me."

But Frank was also in the hands of the tormentors, and Mrs. Sproule, forgetting herself, struck the *carabinero* smartly on the hand. For this she was immediately taken into custody. At the cry of *socorro* (help) an armed escort came out of the guard-house hard by, and Mrs. Sproule was led off, looking rather white, between two small sentries, whose fixed bayonets reached rather dangerously to within an inch or two of her nose.

Sproule went to his wife's assistance, but as he could speak no word of Spanish except "*perdony*," which none of the officials would accept as an apology, they captured him also as an accomplice or accessory after the fact. Had not Frank interfered they would both have incontinently found their way to the *calabozo* or dungeon, by which grand name was dignified the one small cell attached to the guard-house. Fortunately he had a slight acquaintance with the Spanish Colonel who was commandant at the Lines, and after some demur and the payment of a fine, the two culprits were released.

Mrs. Sproule's indignation was too deep for words. She rode on sulkily and silent, except for a few short and very snappish monosyllables when addressed by her husband or Frank.

Presently they reached the open beach, where their only road led along the narrow strip of good hard sand used by all passengers, whether mounted or on foot. The path, generally much frequented, was to-day quite crowded. There were women carrying enormous baskets of clothes, clean or dirty, marvelously poised on their heads; droves of donkeys laden with charcoal; horses nearly lost to view under cargoes of chopped straw destined to fill other stomachs than their own; children at play; long lines of fishermen drawing their nets. Considerate people riding in among the throng would naturally rein in their horses to the slowest pace. Not so Mrs. Sproule. Directly she found herself in the open, she gave her steed the whip and galloped forward, perhaps seeking in rapid motion a relief to her fit of

bad temper. Being an excellent horsewoman, the faster she traveled the better she was pleased. Had there been a fair field before her, it would have mattered little now; but no sooner had her horse extended himself than she came plump into the middle of the crowd. To many of the poor wayfarers, trudging painfully along under their burdens, the sound of galloping hoofs coming from behind had a very terrifying effect, and some turned off at once for safety into the heavy sand by the road, while others, who paused to look round, were lost. Equally perplexed were those who, facing her, found her riding furiously towards them. In a few seconds all were scattered to the four winds of heaven.

Pursued now by yells and execrations, Mrs. Sproule continued her reckless course, meeting next in full career a string of patient mules laden with heavy stones from the Carnicero quarries, and these, overpowered also with dread, doubtful what to do, dashed, some of them into the waves, while not a few turned tail and fled before her, leaving their outraged owners to join in the general cry for revenge.

The commotion was now at its height. In front raced the English lady, with hair and habit streaming in the wind; behind came a mixed crowd of furious natives of all sizes and sexes, shouting, threatening, cursing, seeking the nearest missiles available to cast at their retreating foe. Happily this was a sandy and not a pebbly shore, or the fate of Saint Stephen might have overtaken Mrs. Sproule; and the worst that befell her was a slight blow upon the shoulder from a passing loaf, which one infuriated sufferer, regardless of his dinner, had hurled as she sped away.

Sproule and Frank were not a little exercised in spirit.

"She'll do some mischief yet!" said the husband, as stoically as he could.

"Is he off with her?" asked Frank; adding in an excited voice, "Come on! come on!"

"Not if I know it. No connection with the house over the way. They look wicked, these chaps, and I don't want them to think Janita belongs to us. Leave her alone; she knows what's what. She'll sit fast enough. It's not for her I funk."

"There goes another man knocked over!"

"Gad! they're like nine-pins."

"The rope! the rope!" interrupted Frank, nervously.

All at once he noticed that Mrs. Sproule was rapidly approaching the long line of fishermen in single file, who, like an interminable procession, were walking inland, and hauling on the rope that was bringing their nets to shore. Sproule was roused by this.

"She does not see it! She can't pull him in—not at that pace. Hold hard! hold hard!" he shouted. "The rope! the rope!"

In breathless suspense both waited.

"She's down, as I'm a sinner! No! no! well sat! well sat!" cried Sproule, with enthusiasm, as his wife for a moment seemingly blundered, then touched her horse with the whip, lifted him as it were by the head, and bounded lightly over the half-invisible obstacle.

She was safe. In front the beach was open and free from traffic, and she might continue her Mazeppa-like career for another mile without let or hinderance.

By and by she pulled up her horse and the gentlemen overtook her. They had had no little difficulty in winning their way through the scowling natives, many of whom seemed ready to make violent reprisals. Again Frank came to the rescue, and with handfuls of cigarettes, shoals of coppers, and many soothing words, paved the way to peace. But he lost no time in taking Mrs. Sproule to task for her conduct.

"Why didn't they get out of my road?" she said, petulantly

"They were on their own road," Frank replied, gravely.

"Well, why didn't they keep their own side?"

"You know there is no side-path."

"I know that you always take people's part against me—and these people, too! You're much too fond of them; they're not worth it."

"Your life wouldn't have been worth much, Mrs. Sproule, if I hadn't pacified them. Lucky I could speak their language a little."

"I see no great advantage in it, and its very bad for them. If you didn't encourage them by talking their own gibberish, perhaps they'd try to learn English."

Sproule and Frank laughed heartily at this delightful piece of intolerance.

So far they had not prospered much, and they were doomed to yet greater misfortunes.

Although when they started the weather was brilliantly fine, as the morning wore on came proof of the Spanish proverb that "the sun which is hot too early never lasts throughout the day."

The season, too, was already advanced. To the summer with its stinging heats had succeeded autumn, and now were hourly expected, in early October, the heavy rains—occasionally almost tropical—for which the soil, shriveled by the scorching sun and drought, thirsted in numberless wide-mouthed gaps and fissures. Eyes more experienced than Frank's might have gathered caution from the heavy clouds banking up about mid-

day away over the African hills ; but he was blind to signs of the weather. Since their arrival, months before, they had had no drop of rain. Long disuse breeds forgetfulness. It seemed to Frank quite possible that it never would rain again. No dread of wet jackets had entered the minds of our travelers ; they came entirely unprepared, without waterproofs, or even a complete change of clothes.

The sky was slightly overcast when they halted at Long Stables to bait and have lunch ; but hereabouts the cork-trees gather thick, and there was no view of the distant horizon, no knowledge that the dark masses of vapor, which an hour before had seemed so distant on the hills beyond the Straits, were rapidly reaching upwards and promising soon to obscure the very zenith. All around the air was still ; there reigned abroad a peaceful but expectant calm, as if Nature with folded hands waited contentedly and in happy silence for the revivifying showers, long delayed, but now at last unmistakably at hand.

Our party was again in the saddle and a mile or two on the road when the first few rain-drops fell. By the time they emerged from the cork-wood and reached the open plain, it was raining heavily. The prospect was chill and drear.

"I don't like the look of it at all," said Frank, gloomily.

"Nor I," Sproule added. "We're in for a snorter."

"Is it much farther?" asked Mrs. Sproule, involuntarily shaking her shoulders with a sort of shudder.

"Eight or ten miles to the *cortijo*. We shall be drenched."

No doubt. The rain-drops fell like small shot, under which the horses winced at every stroke, as did their riders whenever the driving sleet touched them on face or neck or hands. Soon all the narrow ruts and channels were filled with water ; the half-dried river was fast swelling to a raging torrent ; the ground underfoot grew boggy and insecure. Sliding, slipping, muddy, bedraggled, a miserable crew, the three travelers pushed on.

Yet Mrs. Sproule bore up bravely enough ; it was her own wish which had brought her to this, and sooner than confess herself in the wrong she would perhaps have endured drowning itself. Sproule's coat was thick, and his constitution, like his conscience, tough. Although he was saturated to the skin, he uttered no word of complaint, taking his wetting as he might accept a clod of clay in his eye when riding a flat race and lagging some way behind. Frank thought less of himself than of the others. He felt that he had brought them to this, and wished he could see an end to the trouble.

The nearest dwelling was the *cortijo*. Frank was not indisposed to halt there and claim hospitality for the night. Yet to

these people he was nearly a stranger, and they might fairly remind him that a mile further on rest and shelter could be obtained by those who cared to pay the charges of the *posada*, a poor country inn of Ximena town. But Frank knew this to be an insect-infested, squalid hole, the discomforts of which, even under ordinary circumstances, would be trying to so fastidious a lady as Mrs. Sproule. The ways of the denizens at Agua Dulce were probably primitive, but at least Mrs. Sproule would find cleanliness, dry clothes, and some show of sympathy—none of which could be counted upon at the *posada*. For her sake, therefore, he resolved to stop at the farm, and use all his eloquence to persuade them to take her in.

But Mrs. Sproule's appearance ought alone to have moved the flintiest heart. Her habit seemed of blotting paper, so thirstily had it sucked up all the moisture of the air; her collar, once so well starched and prim, was now limp and nearly liquid; her pale locks, escaping from her once trimly and even plaits, hung down like hanks of moistened tow.

In answer to the deep-toned gate-bell came first a girl who helped in the kitchen, then Miguel, then Lucas, both of whom, recognizing in Frank the probable purchaser of the Bat, were profuse in their commiseration and offers of assistance. The house and all it contained was of course at the disposal of the travelers; it was theirs—let them but issue their commands.

Frank translated this kindly speech very literally for the benefit of Mrs. Sproule.

"They are very good," she gasped out, taking it for granted that the Spaniards meant all they said.

"A warm fire, some dry clothes, and a cup of tea will soon put me to rights;" and she prepared to dismount from her horse.

"Is the lady ill? Does she wish to enter the house?" asked Lucas, evidently surprised.

"She is nearly dead with fatigue, wet also to the skin. Will not madam your mother take compassion on her and entertain her—at least for this one night?"

Lucas shrugged his shoulders.

"What is the delay?" asked Mrs. Sproule, petulantly. "Really, Mr. Wriottesley, I think you might be more considerate. You seem to ignore the fact that I am benumbed and nearly dead with wet and cold."

"It is not my fault. These people are not to be hurried." Then turning to Lucas, "Surely you cannot turn from your doors to-night a lady in such a plight as this?"

"I will ask my mother; she rules here, not I," replied Lucas, in a doubtful voice.

"Oh, rot it all!" put in Sproule. "Don't let us be beholden to the brutes. You're not dead beat yet, Janita, are you? Let's go on to the hotel,"

"I tell you there isn't one," said Frank, quite crossly.

"I'd rather go back to Gibraltar," groaned Mrs. Sproule.

"That's impossible; it's too late. You'd have to spend the night at the Lines."

But now Lucas returned, and with him the two girls, Ramona and Lola. To both of them Frank bowed—a brief sort of salutation, but there was a light in his eye when it fell upon the face of our heroine, and something more than mere gratitude in his tones when he thanked Lola for her kindness, when, acting as spokeswoman, she came forward, and in her pretty broken English begged Mrs. Sproule to descend.

Inside there had been a short fight. Doña Teresa at first stoutly resisted the invasion, declaring that her house was no hostelry, and that she was aghast at the want of manners of these English in thrusting themselves forward upon strangers and into places to which they were never invited. Lola combated these arguments with a warmth that would certainly have roused anger in Doña Teresa, were it not that Don Mariano's granddaughter was a privileged person, to be treated always with a certain respect. Ramona said little, but she half guessed the real truth, that Lola was thus anxious on behalf of these English folk because they were in some way connected with this new lover who dwelt on the Rock. Of course, the exact state of the case was plain when she came out with Lola to the door, and with some thoughtfulness she at once took charge of Mrs. Sproule, leading her with her husband into the house, while Frank and Lola were for the moment left alone together.

"You have a kind heart, señorita. This poor lady needs all your help."

"We are not as savage as the heathen blacks, Mr. Englishman, although we live, perhaps, in an obscure, benighted spot."

"Where you are, señorita, is for me the centre of the world."

"*Anda!*" cried Lola. "I had hoped you were too wise to use such flattering words."

"Shall I see you to-morrow when we come out to try the horse?"

"I know not."

"And you do not care?"

Lola did not answer.

"When do you return to the Rock?"

"Next week, I hope."

"You wish it then?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Why?"

"Is it not my real home—where my grandfather resides, where I myself was born, where I have many friends? It is but natural that I should be glad to see it again."

Frank would have pressed her to tell him whether there was not just now one reason more, but at this moment Sproule came out and the lovers hastily parted.

"She'll be as right as a nine-pence there," said Sproule. "They'll get her to bed by and by, and make her snug. She wanted me to stop, but I'm drenched too, and I can't well leave the horses till they're comfortably housed."

"Certainly the horses should be your first care," cried Frank, amused at their relative importance with Sproule's wife.

"Well, you know I can't do much for Janita. Besides, these people won't want more of us than can be helped, messing about. I say, Master Frank, that's a bright-eyed 'snorer'" —this was his joking version of *señora*—"you had in tow. You seem pretty thick, too."

"Perhaps we had better push on," replied Frank, in a hurry.

"All right, my hearty. A nod's as good as a wink, you know. We'll toddle on. Janita's in good hands."

They certainly did their best to make Mrs. Sproule comfortable, thanks chiefly to the energy with which Lola acquitted herself of the charge laid upon her by Frank. She insisted upon giving up her own room; she herself acted as maid, and with deft fingers relieved Mrs. Sproule of her dripping habit. She it was who searched out among her own rather scanty wardrobe garments of all sorts—not quite a fit, perhaps, for Lola was the taller of the two, and though slender, not so slight as Mrs. Sproule; yet they were dry, warm and clean. It was Lola who busied herself to prepare some refreshment suited to an English lady's taste. Mrs. Sproule had clamored loudly for tea, but there was not a single leaf in the house. The fragrant herb is counted rather as a medicine in these outlandish parts, going frequently by the same name as "fever water"—a decoction good for *calenturas*, a bitter unpleasant medicinal draught, allied to the bark of the *quina quina*, which ages ago the good Jesuit fathers had brought from the New World. Doña Teresa was frightened and indignant when she heard of Mrs. Sproule's request, protesting loudly that this guest whom she had so unwillingly admitted must be suffering from some contagious disorder by which it was fated for them one and all to die. The cook was equally puzzled, and wondered much how this tea-water was prepared. Was it boiled with tomato sauce to give it flavor, or did the English make it into a soup with green pepper and olive-oil?

Mrs. Sproule received all these attentions with calm conde-

scension, as if they were her undoubted right. Gratitude of favors received was not an active virtue of hers, nor did the memory of what she owed these kind Samaritans debar her from speaking afterwards in the most contemptuous terms of the night she had spent in the Spanish country-house and describing in graphic language the bare, unfurnished rooms, the terrible character of the food, the garlic obtrusive in every dish, the rancid oil of which the salad was made, and the olives which every one tore to pieces with their fingers or teeth. Nor was she more charitable towards the ladies, least of all to Lola, whose unwearied kindness had really laid her under the heaviest obligations. They were all underbred, commonplace people, and Lola particularly, with her great staring eyes and too plentiful hair, could pretend to no good looks, any more than, with her retiring, modest ways, she could claim to have the manners of a lady.

All this and more Mrs. Sproule poured into Frank's unwilling ears when the gentlemen rejoined her next day. He was in truth not sorry when the trial was over, and with it the ill-starred expedition which had given such increased acerbity to Janita's tongue.

CHAPTER XII.

SAVE ME FROM MY FRIENDS.

THERE was now no reason why Lola should remain at Agua Dulce. She had gone thither to be out of harm's way when without a dueña's protection; now that the latter had returned to duty, Lola might also return. Her grandfather's love for her was so great that he could not bear, he said, to be long separated from the child of his heart. Lola herself was ready enough to go back to Gibraltar; that she had not already started was due to the entreaties of her cousins, whose affection was always demonstrative if not deep-seated.

But the attractions that were drawing Lola to the Rock were new and imperious. It was here that Frank Wriottesley lived; here she might meet him again; or, if fate forbade such good fortune, she might perchance see him from time to time in the far-off distance, a being of another sphere whom yet she might innocently worship. For although their acquaintance was still of recent date, she felt that she loved him thoroughly and forever—as do the eager and impressionable daughters of the South, loving once, and once only, but with a warmth and fervor unknown to the denizens of colder climes. Her affection

was returned—of this she was assured. She could read it in Frank's glad eyes, in his joyous voice. At the moment she gave herself no thought how all this might end; consequences, ways and means, obstacles present or to come, all are ignored in a girl's first attachment. She had not the slightest conception how far so engrossing a passion might carry her; she had no mother, no friend to guide her, but happily Lola was not wanting in ballast; pride would soon have combined with common sense to fortify her self-respect, if, indeed, it were threatened. But Frank, though hot-headed, was incapable of any other wish than that of making her his wife.

It was not strange that an acquaintance begun under such conditions should make rapid strides. No set declaration was needed. Lola had accepted Frank's love quite as a matter of course. Little less certain was Frank, even without confession.

But just as their love was intense, so was it unreflective. They were a foolish pair and did many silly things. An English Mrs. Grundy might have been a trifle shocked at the manner in which Frank pursued his suit. She would have held up her hands in horror at the notion of an unmarried girl meeting an unknown lover clandestinely. My precise and demure readers will doubtless hear with regret that Lola with Josefa came day after day about noon to seat herself just below the statue of General Elliot, in the gardens of the Alameda, and that there, quite by accident of course, they found a young gentleman, seemingly without any occupation in life but that of waiting to receive them. It was dreadfully wrong, too, that Josefa should suffer Lola, after the first greetings, to wander amid the shady walks around the garden plots, or in among the embrasures of the carefully concealed battery placed near, and known familiarly as "the Snake in the Grass." Frank was much to blame, again, for making interest to be posted at the New Mole whenever it came his turn to mount guard; and there was no reason on earth why he should waste so many hours in visiting his sentries, particularly those stationed round about Rosia; still less was he called upon to linger for half an hour at a time near a certain cottage which it was no part of his duty to guard. They were all to blame—Frank for proposing, Lola for consenting, and most of all Josefa for betraying her sacred trust and encouraging these dreadful doings.

But the offense which our lovers committed was more against the letter than the spirit of propriety. Lola herself had as yet no notion she was doing wrong; it was thus that flirtations were carried on by other girls of her class, and she was but following the custom of the land of her birth. No one had ever explained

to her that the only proper and blameless method of encouraging a young man's attentions was to meet him at the skating rink, or to dance and sit out with him for hours at a ball, to ride with him next day in the park, to spend weeks together in country-houses or on board yachts, to have almost unlimited opportunities of being in his society—without even a whispered complaint from the impassive lookers-on. Lola had never heard of these methods by which love-making is rendered easy in the great world, nor if she had, were they within her reach. She could but continue simply and in perfect good faith as she had begun. Her conscience was easy, as her mind was pure.

It cannot be said, however, that the other parties to this peculiar suit were altogether as happy. Matters could not go on thus forever. There were times when Frank Wriottesley remembered that he was still dependent upon his uncle, Sir Hector Harrowby, a man, as we know, whose ire might easily be aroused. How would he receive the news that Frank proposed to take as his wife—as the future mistress of Grimswych Park—a nameless girl, almost a foreigner, foreign at least in education and in the tongue she spoke? When such thoughts arose he grew perturbed in spirit, doubtful of the future, not varying one whit in his affection for Lola, but sorrowful for her and regretful that it was not in his power to spare her even the temporary anguish which his uncle might cause if at first he should refuse his consent to their marriage. But Frank could not be unsanguine long; the moment he met Lola all gloomy thoughts vanished into thin air, and he was angry with himself for doubting at all. "Who could resist her?" he asked with rapture; and for the time he was satisfied that all would come right in the end.

Frank, confident in his own uprightness, could wait hopefully. Not so Josefa, who was in a perpetual fever lest affairs might at any moment take an unsatisfactory turn. Her master might discover her double dealing, and she would forthwith be ejected from his house. Of course she knew discovery was certain to come sooner or later, but it was naturally her desire to postpone as long as possible the inevitable day. Perhaps she might succeed in shifting the blame from herself, and blinding Don Mariano to the nefarious part she had played. But as this was doubtful, she cast about to indemnify herself otherwise. She was ready to sacrifice Lola just as she had already betrayed her trust to her master, and waited but a hint from Frank to assist him in any infamous plan. The more she pondered the more satisfied she became that the consummation that would suit her personally best would be for Lola to leave her home. To purchase her complicity Frank would doubtless pay handsomely.

With this money she might retire to some sheltered spot among the Sierras or upon the smiling slopes of the Mediterranean, to spend the remainder of her days. No remorse would have followed her; nor had she in advance one jot of compunction in contemplating the horrible crime to which she was ready to give her aid. Taking for granted that Frank's thoughts were as evil as her own, she was at no pains to sound him on the subject. Her time was rather devoted to undermining Lola, and insidiously seeking to combat in advance any scruples which the innocent child might by and by display.

Josefa's chief fear was lest any unforeseen accident should precipitate a crisis. If this could be avoided she might trust to her own skill and good fortune. The great difficulty was to keep Don Mariano in ignorance of what was going on; to prevent Lola from broaching the subject. Several times our heroine had suggested that it was time to present Frank Wriottesley to her grandfather; it was right that the old man should know him, and receive him openly at his house. Josefa, better versed in the old man's sentiments towards the officer-class, used all her eloquence to persuade Lola to postpone the introduction from day to day. The dueña did not dare to explain her real reason. Lola had an instinctive dislike to aught that was underhand, and she would have refused to receive Frank's addresses were she sure that her grandfather disapproved.

Meanwhile, in all innocence, she continued to meet her lover, telling herself from day to day that she ought not to conceal the true state of affairs much longer from the grandfather who loved her so well, yet still shrinking with maiden modesty from exposing even before her nearest relative this new and beautiful possession which she treasured as sacred.

But the crisis which Josefa dreaded was close at hand, and it came to pass in this wise.

Winter-time is for the English residents and their friends essentially "the gay season" at Gibraltar, when the climate is generally perfection, and there is no lack of the sports which are most dear to English hearts. There is shooting of snipe and cock and red-legged partridge in the neighboring hills; and no talk of license, of game-laws, or preserves. For those that care to embark more deeply, Barbary supplies wild boar. The Calpe hounds meet twice a week on Spanish soil, and draw large fields to exasperate the uninitiated tillers of the soil by seemingly reckless contempt for growing wheat. The air is fresh, if not exactly keen; the Vermilion Sierra wears at times a coating of snow; now and again a film of ice as thick as a bank note is found in a pail upon the top of the Rock, and our compatriots call the weather seasonable, and nearly persuade

themselves it is cold. By the natives the winter is not so much admired. *Al fresco* life is no longer possible; the bands have ceased to play at night upon the Alameda; to the summer moonlight—yellow and strong as northern sunshine—have succeeded stormy skies and torrents of rain. For them sports such as we worship have neither meaning nor attraction; to gallop at break-neck pace over uneven ground would be no diversion; dinner parties are no festivities to them; shooting is a mere wanton destruction of life. They love gayety, music, crowded gatherings, chatter, spectacles of every sort. The theatre is especially popular, whether the performance be the music of Donizetti interpreted by a second-rate troop—the *Zarzuela*, or Spanish comic opera sung by native artists,—or last of all, the mere amateur efforts of the English officers, laudably seeking to support the credit of our national stage.

There was great talk that December of an affair of the latter kind, and Lola had begged hard of her grandfather to be allowed to see it. Don Mariano, taking alarm, had as usual refused, at first peremptorily, then with less and less force, as his stern resolves faded before our heroine's vigorous appeals. At the last moment the appearance of Ramona and her brother, who had come in unexpectedly, decided the matter. The cousins expressed a keen desire to see an English play, still more to see the *élite* of the English garrison, and before their entreaties Bellota was courteously compelled to yield. A box was with difficulty procured upon the grand tier, in front of which Ramona and Lola took their seats long before the curtain went up, and attracted no little attention as the house gradually filled. Neither the ripe, handsome freshness of Ramona, nor Lola's perfect features were familiarly known, and both were keenly examined by not a few opera-glasses in the stalls.

Frank Wriottesley came in late. Lola, when he had spoken of this performance, had told him there was no prospect of her being present. Therefore he had no particular motive for going. But the Sproules had a box and pressed him to join them during the evening. He was on his way thither, pausing first to speak to a friend or two in the stalls, when some one called his attention to "that stunning Spanish girl in the box on the grand tier."

"Lola!"

Without a moment's hesitation Frank hastened up-stairs and knocked at the door of the box. Josefa's heart was in her mouth when she opened it.

"You cannot come in, señor. This place is too public. There are here many who know us well, and the *amo* would soon hear of it. I pray you, for the love of God, retire."

But Frank would take no denial. Besides, Lola had turned her blushing face towards him, and was waving him a welcome with her fan.

"A least sit here," cried Josefa, pointing to a chair near the door. "We shall be lost, undone, if you go now to the front. Wait at least till the act is over."

There was sense in what she said, and although Frank was eager, he was also circumspect at times. After all he did not care as yet to blazon forth too loudly the fate that had overtaken him. It would be time enough by and by to advertise his engagement, and challenge criticism for the girl of his choice. So he seated himself demurely in the back part of the box, contenting himself with exchanging a few words with Miguel, who was not overjoyed to see him, and bowing pleasantly to Ramona in return for her cordial greeting.

Presently the curtain fell. There was the usual shuffle of the cards. People moved from their seats, or turned to gossip with one another. Within the first few moments Lola changed places with Josefa.

"You said you would not come," said Frank.

"*Com tu!*" replied Lola, pretending to pout. "You also declared that nothing should bring you hither. Is it thus you behave, *kijo*, when out of my sight? Which then of all these grand proud dames had power to tempt you to break a promise made to me? Your promises melt fast, like fat in the frying-pan."

"There is none here fit to fasten your shoe-strings, Lola."

"*Anda!* they are English though, of your own blood. Why did you come abroad to hunt partridges in the Sierras, when there was better game close to your hand at home?"

"You know the saying, '*Cual es mi tierra? la de mi mujer*' (Which is my country? that to which my wife belongs)."

"But I am not your wife," said Lola, hanging her head.

"You will be some day."

"That will be as you behave, my son. Where do the wives come in your land over yonder? After the horses and the dogs?"

Lola had not read Tennyson, but she had noticed the English officers and their tastes.

"See, the curtain is up; they are beginning again. Do you like the play?"

"It was dull till you came. I cannot follow well; you talk so fast, you English, yet the words can hardly come out, because you shut your teeth quite close and your lips—like this."

"Don't shut your lips, Lolita. It spoils your beauty."

"*Vaya!* Thanks for the favor you do me."

"If we were not here in public, I'd kiss you."

"*Indecente!*" cried Lola, putting her fan quickly with a pretty gesture between them. "Be quiet! Hush! Listen to them down there. Tell me, what are they saying, now?"

"Shall I interpret it for you?" said Frank, earnestly, taking her hand in his. "Oh, I must indeed," he added, when she seemed to object, "I must have your hand. See, he has got her hand down there upon the stage: I must do that too if you wish me to translate."

"Yes; but they are acting; it is different. You must not take my hand. *Paco!* They will see us; they will indeed."

"No, they won't. There!"

He had kissed her hand.

"It's not my fault," Frank went on, as she blushed deeply and tried to draw away. "That fellow on the stage is doing it—and badly too. Now he is saying, 'I love you, I love you; you are the darling of my life, the starlet of my soul—'"

"It is not that. What nonsense! You are inventing."

"It is true; I swear that it is true. Those are the words he uses, only he does not mean them—and I do."

Frank flattered himself that he had escaped observation, and so, in truth, he had—except from one pair of lynx eyes. Mrs. Sproule, seated opposite, had caught sight of a red jacket in the box with the Spanish beauties, but had no suspicion that Wriottesley was the wearer thereof. She had seen Ramona and Lola early in the evening, and remembered them both perfectly, but had not thought it necessary to bow. Her gratitude for kindness at Agua Dulce was not keen enough to disturb her; nor did she feel there was the least necessity for making any return, even to the extent of publicly recognizing the people to whom she owed so much. In her own mind she rather fancied that the kindness had been on her part in condescending to honor their house with her presence, and accept their very humble attentions. But while she was still wondering why the faithless Frank had not put in an appearance at the play, she suddenly became aware that it was he who had been seated all this time in the recesses of the opposite box. Highly incensed at this desertion, she nursed her rage, and took him very seriously to task the following day.

"Well, Mr. Wriottesley, I hope you are properly ashamed of yourself."

"And why?"

"Did we not keep a seat for you last night? And yet you never came."

"I was detained."

"In the opposite box only. Don't pretend you were not at the theatre, for I saw you, although you tried to hide."

"That I did not, I declare."

"When people's deeds are evil, they shun the light."

"Insinuating that my deeds are evil?"

"If the cap fits you, by all means put it on."

"I have done nothing of which I need be ashamed, Mrs. Sproule. Those ladies with whom I sat,—you know who they are, don't you?"

"One of the girls, that sallow-faced one, reminded me rather of the people we saw at that Spanish farm."

"The same!"

"Common people, rather. I wonder you care to associate with them."

"They are ladies, Mrs. Sproule. I cannot suffer you to say one word in their disparagement," cried Frank, rather hotly, disclosing his hand.

"Really, you must be rather hard hit to defend them so warmly. Pray, when are we to congratulate you?" said Mrs. Sproule, with a sneer; "and which of the two is the lucky girl of your choice?"

"Mrs. Sproule, your question will have to be answered some day, and I am not ashamed to answer it at once. One of those ladies I firmly intend to make my wife."

"How romantic! And pray, how will Sir Hector receive the news?"

"My uncle would never say 'no'; not if he really knew Lola."

"Which is Lola? the stout or the thin one? I forget," went on Mrs. Sproule, screwing up her eyes as people do when trying to remember something of very trifling importance.

"You ought not to forget her; it was she who was at so much pains to make you comfortable at Agua Dulce."

"I thought she was a sort of upper servant and would have given her some silver, only there was not time. You cannot really mean, Mr. Wriottesley, that you are serious in this?"

"Quite!"

"It seems utterly suicidal. But I know you are an obstinate man, upon whom arguments are thrown away. If you must, you must."

"And you will give me your support? I shall want the good word of a friend to bring Sir Hector round."

"You place me in a quandary, Mr. Wriottesley. I cannot admit that this is the right sort of a match for you, nor can I desert you in your distress. What do you wish me to do? Call? I will if you like; only you must tell me what are her belongings here upon the Rock; I cannot go all the way to Ximena again."

Frank, faltering a little, said, "Her name is Bellota. They live at a cottage near Rosia Bay."

"Bellota! the name seems familiar."

"Probably you have heard it before. Old Bellota is a man that every one knows."

"The Viscount!" to be sure! What a strange coincidence! Of course, I mean that your young lady cannot be any relation of that notorious old Jew?"

"Only his granddaughter," said Frank, plump and plain. Now that he was driven into a corner he stood to his guns.

"What!" shrieked Mrs. Sproule in one prolonged note of surprise. "You must be out of your mind, Mr. Wriottesley."

"I am not at all out of my mind. On the contrary, Mrs. Sproule, I am very sane and very positive."

"The man is not only a shop-keeper, but a shameless old usurer, I am told, into the bargain. It quite takes away my breath. Oh, Mr. Wriottesley, you must let me say distinctly that this will never, never do for you."

"On such a matter I must claim to be the best judge. The question affects me, and me only."

"Do you think your friends are all fools, Mr. Wriottesley? If you yourself—"

"Thank you, Mrs. Sproule; pray, call me any names you like."

"We can't suffer you to cut your own throat, I mean—without remonstrance. Please, please be guided by advice. Do not be so wrong-headed: do not recklessly throw all your prospects away without pausing to consider what you are about to do. You can never marry a girl like this."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Sproule, that is my business."

"Sir Hector will never stand it."

"That also is my business."

"Dear, dear! have you no common sense left? Can what is called love make big men so childish and irrational all at once? Mr. Wriottesley, do be persuaded. By and by you would regret it—no one more. Do pause: you know the interest I have always taken in you; forgive my speaking so plainly now. I beseech you not to sacrifice everything to this most absurd and inconsiderate passion."

"You are merely wasting words, Mrs. Sproule. I have quite made up my mind."

"A more obstinate and willful man I never met in all my life," said Mrs. Sproule, energetically. "But I give you up; from this time forth I wash my hands of you."

"Don't let us part in anger, Mrs. Sproule. There is much for which I have to thank you and your husband. I had hoped that now and in the future you would stand my friends."

"You won't let us," cried the lady. "We can't encourage

you in such folly as this. We cannot, in common justice, give you any advice but the very strongest entreaties to put an end to the whole affair."

"I would not go past my plighted word for all the estates in my uncle's county. More: sooner than surrender my love for this girl I would sacrifice my right hand."

"These are mere heroics, the rhapsodies of a lunatic."

"Thank you, Mrs. Sproule; then I will save you the trouble of listening longer."

"I won't detain you. I see I might as well talk to the wall."

Thus they parted, coldly, but without any actual breach; and after he was gone Mrs. Sproule set to work to consider whether, in spite of all his obstinacy, she might not yet compass his deliverance from the ruin to which he was so perseveringly tending. She looked upon him as a man to be saved, even against his will. He was to be protected against himself, just as obstinate people are compelled, willy-nilly, to have their children vaccinated, and dirty people ought to be made to keep themselves and their houses clean.

Of course, she told herself, she was actuated by only the best intentions; but we know whither good intentions lead, and beneath their fair surface other motives urged her on. Her temper suffered not a little at the obstinate opposition which Frank displayed. She was hurt at finding that she had no power to guide him; sore because it seemed that a real wholesome passion had come to put an end to the silly Platonic affection which all along she fancied had existed between Frank Wriottesley and herself. When thus roused Mrs. Sproule did not recoil from measures which would have been loathsome to others. This match must be prevented, *coûte que coûte*, by any means, fair or foul, Bellota must be undeceived. No doubt he encouraged Frank Wriottesley as a great *parti* for his child. Sir Hector also must be put upon his guard; he must hear the plain truth about this low girl whom his nephew desired to lift into a position far above her deserts.

Mrs. Sproule was not a person to leave one stone unturned in the prosecution of her resolves: and therefore she set to work to ferret out what she could against Lola and her family, in order to point her arguments with Sir Hector Harrowby. In this she found a willing ally in Ciruelas, who had given her lessons on the guitar and who gladly lent his assistance to be revenged on Frank. Through him she obtained a highly-colored account of the fate of the first Dolores, our heroine's mother, and many items of gossip which represented old Bellota in anything but a favorable light. Armed with these facts she sent an anonymous letter to Sir Hector, which, to avoid detection, she made

Cruelas write in his own hand. By his aid she addressed old Bellota also in the same cowardly fashion.

This was the substance of the latter letter :

“ You think perhaps that in Francis Wriottesley you catch a wonderful prize for your granddaughter Lola. It is not so. He is heir to a rich man, but that man has many caprices. His first act would be to disinherit his nephew if he married beneath him, or against his uncle’s consent. Take care, then, how far you suffer him to pay court to the girl. Nothing can come of it but bitter disappointments, perhaps ruin for the child I presume you love.”

This missive, duly dispatched, reached Don Mariano through the post.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LOVERS MEET AND PART.

IT would be difficult to give due effect to any description of the rage into which old Bellota fell on receipt of Mrs. Sproule’s letter. At first he stormed and swore, and tore his hair ; but as soon as the first paroxysm of passion had abated he resolved to see his grandchild and insist upon her renouncing her lover once and for all.

The name of Frank Wriottesley in the anonymous letter was not unknown to him. It was Bellota’s business to be well acquainted with nearly all the officers of the garrison—certainly with all who, like Frank, were noted for spendthrift tastes. Our hero had indeed done a little business already, not with Bellota himself, but with one of his agents, having required a larger sum of ready money to pay for the Bat than he could quite lay hands upon. His bills were in Bellota’s strong box at Crutchett’s Ramp, and the old spider had thus a certain knowledge of Frank—by simple hearsay, no more. But this raising of money was not a point to give Frank favor in Bellota’s eyes, even had the old man been otherwise well disposed towards him, which he was not. Bellota’s dislike of the whole class to which Frank belonged was still as strong as ever, and this underhand courtship, which had providentially come to light, made him if anything more bitter than before. He was resolved to put an end to the whole affair—a positive and unmistakable end.

Within an hour of the receipt of Mrs. Sproule’s letter he returned to Rosia Cottage, coming post-haste up the trellised veranda which led from the outer gate to the house, and mak-

ing straight for the window opening on to the garden, at which his granddaughter generally sat.

Josefa, who was with her charge, crossed herself devotedly as she saw her master approach. Frank Wriottesley but a moment before had gone over the wall—his usual mode of exit.

"*El amo!* The master at this hour of the morning! But at least to-day the saints are kind. Had he seen your *novio*," she said to Lola, "not all the saints in the calendar, not Michael and all his angels, would have saved me from destruction. It puts me all in a tremble. Señorita, what evil spirit tempted you to favor this *rubio*—this mad young Englishman with his yellow hair and false blue eyes? Were there no lads, tall and brown, to take your fancy among your own people?"

"Love knows no laws, Josefya—we are its slaves. But it is strange that *mi abuelo* should return to the house at this unusual hour."

"Some sour grape has given him the colic. He looks to have that or worse," went on Josefa, *sotto voce*, as Don Mariano drew near.

In truth the old man's face was black, and his eyes flashed like storm-signals in an angry sky.

"Begone!" he said abruptly to Josefa. "I have that to say to this young lady which it beseems not a servant to hear."

Josefa hated to be called a servant, and it was with an unmistakable scowl that she rose and prepared to retire.

"Save your frowns, señorita of little count, you will want them ere long, for you and I have a settlement to make that may perchance open your flesh. Keep your back ready; there is stick enough and to spare close at hand."

Lola had been at work, and she went on stitching diligently while her grandfather was talking, seeming, with downcast eyes, to take but little notice of his words. But when he had seated himself near her, and had taken out, with the force of long habit, his tobacco-pouch and bundle of cigarette papers, she stretched out her hand, saying:

"Shall I make you one?"

"*Gracias*, no," replied Don Mariano, thereby showing himself to be unusually ruffled. He loved of all things to see her make his cigarettes and light them. He loved to watch her nimble fingers, and to gaze at her bright beauty as she stood before him.

"Has some bad insect stung you, *abuelo*, that you are so cross?"

"Stung! Ay, truly am I stung, and by a poisonous asp."

"Am I the culprit? Shall I do penance with candle and book, or go to the shrine of our Lady of Europa barefoot to tell my beads by the big lighthouse that guards the Straits?"

The girl's gayety was a trifle forced. Some misgiving seized her that her grandfather's rage was connected with Frank Wriottesley. Wrong-doers are always in momentary dread of detection. Every turn of the door-handle threatens to disclose the bearer of a forger's warrant of arrest; every footstep is that of searchers near the concealed corpse. Lola, in her little innocent way, felt herself a guilty thing, and wished now that long ere this she had made full confession of her crime—the great crime of being in love.

"Be serious, child. I am sore at heart. Nay, more; I am enraged, furious, more savage than a bull eight years old at bay within the ring."

"And with me?" asked Lola, trembling in spite of herself. There was a curious cadence in her grandfather's voice which frightened her: she had seen him angry before, but never quite like this. "What have I done, *abuelito* of my heart? Tell me of my sin that I may make a clean breast of it and seek absolution. Surely it is not past forgiveness?"

"Lola, as you hope for salvation, tell me, speak truly—you have a lover? No?"

She blushed scarlet, but answered saucily enough:

"*Ya lo creo*. I should think I had—a dozen. Have not all girls, save those that squint or carry humps?"

"If it were a dozen I should not mind; there is safety in crowds. But they tell me you have but one—one only—and he is not to my liking."

"Who tells you, pray? Does every gossiping dame that climbs your stony stair to carry you some new tale of me and my doings? Am I the talk of all those prosy knaves with whom you sit and bargain?"

"Is it true, I ask—true that you are enmeshed, entangled with one of those fiends in scarlet cloth that for some hidden purpose God suffers to walk this earth as He does snakes and scorpions? Is this true? answer me, child. Hold up your head, and with your eyes speak as well as with your lips. Deny, for the love of Heaven—denounce this wicked, cursed lie. Tell me you do not love this Francis Wriottesley."

"No, *abuelo*, I cannot deny it," said Lola, firmly and looking him full in the face. "For it is true, and I glory in the truth. I love him, and he loves me."

"Who is he? An officer? No?"

"Yes: I believe he is."

"You believe so! Foolish goose! Was it not the glitter of the tinsel that took you first? The coat that is not yet his own—for such as he pay no men their dues; and the gilding that is on it will tarnish like the baser metal of which his heart is made. Where didst meet him first?"

"At San Roque."

"I feared it. That Judas, Josefa, has played me false, Oh, would that I held the power of the governor of this strong place, and I would mash her to a mummy behind this rock, and leave her till the sharks and vultures got indigestion from her foul remains."

"*Señor mio*, it was not Josefa's fault. When I fainted in the ring it was he who carried me out; and then in the evening, at the Casino—we danced."

"Who took him there?"

"Miguel."

"Holy sainted men! but every hand was against me. Fate is hard to fight. And since then you have met often?"

"At Agua Dulce; he came thither to buy horses."

"And here, in this house, upon the public walks, where? Don't hang your head. Can I not guess? Shame on you, mild-eyed and gentle-voiced but deceitful and double-faced child! But as for Josefa, sourest locust of this season, she shall smart, I say. And you, Lola, you must give him up. Nay, seek not to alter my resolve. You must and shall forget him and promise me never to see him more."

"I will not," replied Lola with decision. Then suddenly changing her tone she cried, "Oh, do not say you will separate us for ever, *abuelo mio*! It would be my death."

And she fondled him and made much of him, as women will—even the purest and best—to stave off sentence and gain their ends.

Don Mariano held her from him at arms-length and spoke slowly:

"*María de los Dolores*—Our Lady of Sorrows—thus were you named at birth. Know'st why?"

"It was my mother's name. No?"

"There was yet another reason than that."

Bellota paused; he hated to tear up the hard ground, the crust beneath which his griefs were buried though still alive. But with a strong effort he continued:

"Listen, Lola; I will tell you a tale, as often I have romanced to amuse you, when, almost a babe, you sat prattling and laughing on my knee. There was a man once—no matter when—happy in the love of a devoted wife, surrounded by a host of little ones whom the good God had given him. He was poor—what matter? Returning when his day's toil was done, a dozen merry tongues greeted his approach; the good wife soothed his brow, and upon his own peaceful hearth he forgot his troubles, and gained fresh courage to struggle for their daily bread. Suddenly, in one short moment, so it seemed, there came a blight

—a plague fell upon him. His saints forgot to speak for him, their shrines perchance had been neglected—perchance our Holy Mother looked away, and without her sheltering grace the Evil One had power to work his will. At one stroke, at one fell swoop, in one short summer's night, he lost them all, but one—all that he held most dear,—the wife he adored, the children of his loins,—all dead, dead of the same fell fever—the yellow plague. Ah, God! how well I remember now.”—As he grew more impassioned, the flimsy pretense of speaking at second-hand vanished, and it became clear that it was his own story that he told. “How well I remember each fatal blow. I knew the disease by heart, and could detect it as it crept towards them with stealthy step, noting each symptom, unmasking every move, till hope was lost and all was done. Nine blessings I once possessed, and eight were gone. One alone remained—saved, as I think, by the intercession of those others already gathered up to glory. She, by the mercy of Heaven, was spared, to be, as I fondly hoped, some consolation in my terrible grief. In her alone I lived. There was none to compare with her, as she grew up, gracious and beautiful, a gift direct from Heaven. It is of your mother, Lola, that I speak.”

“And what became of her, *abuelo*. You never spoke like this before,—tell me what happened to my sweet mother? May she rest in peace!”

“She was the apple of my eye. I think I would have sold my soul to bring one gleam of pleasure to her cheek. I had nursed and tended and loved her from a child; and yet, and yet—”

“Yes, yes! go on.”

“She left me without a word—deserted me, her father, to follow a scoundrel who dazzled her by the deceitful light he flashed in her eyes, like a will-o'-the-wisp luring her to her ruin. I went up one morning, as was my wont, with a dish of the fruit she loved. Her room was empty; she was gone. Gone! Oh God, I thought I should have died.”

He paused for breath, consumed by strong emotion; then broke out into sudden maledictions:

“May Heaven's curse wither him and blast him still. But he is dead; he died soon afterwards, leaving her forsaken, also to die. His grand relations took no heed. Who was she? A light, wanton girl, full of the warm southern blood, whose passionate affection had been beyond control. They would not recognize her; nay, they drove her from them; and she came back to me, wasted and worn, the shadow of her former self—she returned to me, her father, whom one short year before she had deserted without remorse or shame.”

"But say, *abuelo*, say quickly, you did not reject her, you did not turn her from your door—poor darling?"

"I was not inhuman, Lola. The tigers suckle their whelps. She was the last of nine who had called me father; she was of my flesh and blood; for their sake and hers I took her in, and did my best to nurse the pale flame of life which had flickered so low. But alas! our blessed sun was not strong enough to thaw the chilling frosts of the inhospitable North. She died—as you were born, Dolores. Dolores! child of my innermost heart, she died and left me too!"

Very bitter was the old man's grief as he re-told the story of his sorrow. Great tears were rolling down his wrinkled cheeks, and his brow was deeply marked by the pain he suffered.

Our Dolores, Dolores the younger, was silent. What indeed could she say? The terrible story was quite new to her. Its sad details went straight to her heart. She grieved for the lost mother she had never known, but she had no apprehensions for herself. She need not distrust her Frank. If her grandfather did but know him! Full of this thought, she stole her hand gently towards his, and following it, seated herself, child-like, upon the old man's knee.

"*Abuelo abuelito*, I would cut off my hair and cast it in the gutter sooner than give you pain. There would be no joy for me in life if you were sorrowful and sad—nothing would tempt me from your side. I do not dream of leaving you—nor does my Francisco wish it. He—"

"Is a lying thief—a villain who steals in unawares to rob a better man of his choicest jewel."

"No, grandfather! *Paco* is as honest as the sun, and as good as he is true. He would scorn to do a dirty deed."

"What call you this clandestine plucking of the turkey, then? Is it not mean and underhand to pay you court and say no word to me?"

"Would you have received him, *abuelo*, if he had asked your permission first?"

This was a home thrust.

"That is past now. It is too late to speak of that. He did not give me the chance. I have sworn an oath that you shall never fall into the clutches of such a man as he. We may be fallen low in the world, but our sense of shame is not less keen on that account."

"What shame, then? Can there be any shame in such love as his? I take pride in it, as I do in the prospect of being one day called his wife."

"His wife! Child, it is plain that you know little of this wicked world, still less of him who flatters your foolish heart with honeyed

words. Think you it is his purpose to wed you, to put you on a level with himself and the cold proud people of his class? Lola! innocent, guileless child, you may thank God that your eyes have not been opened too late to the fraud and falsehood which are as the breath in the nostrils of such men as he."

"You do him foul wrong, grandfather," cried Lola with wide flashing eyes. Wonder at Bellota's words had opened them first and now indignation followed to give them a keener fire. "See, here is his ring; he has pledged me his troth. He has sworn that I, and I alone, shall be his wife."

"Words, idle words! His deceitful, lying tongue can coin them as fast as a Jew doubloons."

"Paco tells no lies."

"We shall see. At least he does not tell you *all* the truth."

"How know you that? What remains for him to tell?" inquired Lola, artlessly.

"Does he tell you of his house, of his relatives, away beyond there in rich, proud England?"

"He has told me that his parents are dead; that they lost their lives in a fatal shipwreck."

"Ay! but has he spoken of that uncle to whom he is fast bound, hand and foot, owing him everything in this world?"

"Yes; I know him by heart, and the house in which he lives, and which will be Francisco's too some day."

"And yours also? Is it so foolish an idiot? God makes it easy for the fool to swallow. Half such a pill would stick in my dry throat. That house is not his."

"But it will be."

"Never; not if he marries with such as you. Of this I have good proof. His uncle would probably disinherit him if he took home any bride not of the old man's choosing; but assuredly if he demeaned himself to wed with a Bellota—though our ancestors were kings when his yet tilled the soil. If you married him you would but disgrace and ruin him."

"I would die first!" cried Lola. "But he never told me this. O grandfather, is it really true?"

"I have it on the best authority—a letter from a friend."

"May I ask him? Let him but tell me with his own lips that I stand between him and fortune, and there will be no necessity for your stormy words. I would give him up of my own free will."

"You shall see him. But trust not to what he says. He will truckle and dissemble, as lying villains always do," cried Bellota, still beside himself with rage.

"Methinks this unmeasured abuse comes but ill from you, *abuelo*, who owest him, if not your life, at least escape from serious harm."

"I owe him? Girl, are you mad?"

"Did you not go on board the ship that brought him out, and did not the rude sentry seek to stay your steps with rough handling and coarser words? Who saved you then? You never knew? *Paco*, my *Paquito*, who has told me the story again and again, for I loved to hear that he was kind and generous, and could stoop to protect the aged when persecuted and in trouble. And this is the only return you make him—abuse, cruel abuse!"

Lola's words staggered the old man not a little. He was silent; then with a heavy sigh, he rose, saying, "My oath! my oath!" and went into the house.

How the poor child struggled with herself that night! It was now, for the first time, that she really missed a mother's love. She had no refuge in her distress, no bosom friend to whom she could fly to pour out all her woes. She felt alone in the world, and conscious that she must decide for herself this knotty question, wherein lay the first real difficulty in her happy life.

It touched her so nearly! If disappointed now, it seemed as if her whole future must be tainted with the bitter grief. Was it possible, she asked herself, to give up her Frank, her treasure? And yet, to keep him would be at the price of his own ruin. Could she be guilty of such utter selfishness? For, if her grandfather's story were true, it amounted to this. No; a thousand times better lose him than bring him into misery and disgrace. But for this she would never have despaired. Her grandfather's opposition could not be quite insuperable. Had she not already talked the old man out of refusals more peremptory than this? His obstinacy, as we know, had never prevailed long against her persistence, backed up with her pleading voice and winning ways. Might she not once more overcome his scruples?

Yes; if that were all, there might have been hope; but there could be no hope if these cross-grained relatives in England were really so disagreeable and hard.

And at length out of all her long and tearful self-communings came the decision that she would obtain confirmation of her fears, or the reverse, from the lips of her lover himself.

When Frank came next day to the garden, she received him coldly enough.

"It is an age since we met, *vida mia* (my life)," cried impetuous Frank, seeking to infold her at once in his arms.

"Back; do not touch me."

"You are not usually so shy, my soul's planet. In what have I displeased you?"

"Sit there—on that far sofa—a long way off. Yes; it is my order; sit as I desire you."

"Are we going to play at soldiers?"

"There is no joke or play in what I am going to say to you. *Paco*, you must be very formal—you must. I have much to ask, and our talk must be serious—very serious."

"But you love me still? Do not deny your creed."

"We shall see—it depends. There! sit still, do. Wait where you are, my son, and tell me quickly—who are you?"

Frank laughed aloud.

"This is a court of justice, then, and you are to try me in the balance? Be merciful, most righteous judge!"

"It will be as you answer, culprit. Are you not very wicked? You should be hung in chains, and sent to work at Ceuta. But now try and speak the truth. Tell me, I ask again, who are you?"

"My name is Francis Wriottesley; my friends call me Frank. My Lola says *Paquito*. My hair is light, my eyes green; I have two of them, item two arms, item two legs—"

"So has a goose, my friend. But this is not to the purpose. Where do you come from? Where is your home—the house of your friends?"

"At Grimswych. I told you of that long ago."

"And you live—how?"

"How I can—without you, that is to say."

"Does your life depend upon me then?"

"You know it does—my life and my happiness."

"What is your idea of happiness, *Paco*? Stay! let me ask you—you know my cousins' farm at Agua Dulce. There by the mill-stream stands a little hut of reeds, where lives the man who feeds Teresa's pigs. His name is Sebastian Barsé—a worthy man, too, who supports his wife and ten little ones on only a few farthings a day. Tell me, could you live on bread and oil, and a few farthings a day?"

"With you, certainly."

"And the pigs?"

"Your Spanish pigs are dear black balls, and cleaner than many Christians. What pleasanter existence than feeding the pigs, and my Lola to bring the acorns. You would bring my dinner too, a bowl of *gazpacho*."

"Which you know you cannot eat, and always call pigs' food."

"Well, then, they could have it, and I the acorns; or you would give me a fowl boiled in rice, or a salad of oranges and saffron, or some broth of yellow beans. What would it matter if you yourself cooked it?"

"You would live thus, you, my fine *caballero*, with your nice English ways, your comforts, and your luxuries? You would be ready to face penury and squalor and trials?"

"If needs be, yes; and more, to gain you."

"And does it not amount to this, Francisco? To marry me would be to make yourself an outcast from your people. No?"

"Oh, no, my beautiful bird! Now I see what you are driving at."

"But, yes; I say. You see I know all about you—that you have an uncle rich as all the Indies—a hard cold man, an English *milor*, with no sympathy for such as me and mine—who would not suffer you to fall so low as to wed with the grand-child of a man who keeps a shop. Is not this so? Would your uncle consent to such a bride as me?"

"My uncle is anxious I should settle. He wishes me to be married."

"To me?"

"To you, my child—at least, he would if he knew you." Frank could not help fencing a little. He was too honest to deceive Lola willfully, yet the insinuations dropped by Mrs. Sproule had set him thinking, and he was far from confident that the way to happiness would at first be quite clear of obstacle.

"Ah, wicked! have I caught you? He does not know me. How then?"

Frank was for the moment posed. He could not reply all at once.

"Listen to me, *Paco*—Francisco, whom God and the Virgin know I love, ay, more than I do my own soul, may I be forgiven for saying so. I would die, die the death of all the martyrs, rather than stand in the way between you and all your people. Yes, you might cut me into little pieces as they did the blessed St. Christopher, or grill me on a gridiron like the holy St. Lawrence, before I would—"

"Stay, stay, Lola; you go on too fast—"

"Listen first to me, Francisco. Nothing, I say, would induce me to act as the bitter pill for your English friends to swallow;" and then, stamping her little foot with increasing vehemence, as the question presented itself to her in a new light, she went on, "and have we no pride, do you suppose? We Bellotas have blood as blue, ay bluer, than yours. We are sons and daughters of some one (*hidalgos*), and our ancestors two generations back were grandees of Spain. We may be poor and fallen now. My father sells you what you wish, and I am but an ignorant underbred child; still—"

"Why, Lola, you are fit to be a duchess."

"Thank you for the honor you do me."

"I wish to heaven I were a duke for your sake. You should be a duchess then I swear."

"You are my *Paco*—ah! if only you might be—and that would be quite enough for me."

"Come, Lolita, you are more reasonable now. You have been jesting so far, you have not said all this in real earnest. Nothing would make you forget your promise?"

"I know that I can never love again; that the world holds only one man for me; that, if I cannot have my *Paco*, no one else will do. But understand me, plain, plain; you shall not win me, never, never, never, unless your friends agree."

"Must they come and ask you?"

"Yes; at least, I must know that they wish me to be your wife. I am resolved, Francisco, I am by my salvation and the sweet Virgin Mother."

"Then my uncle shall ask you himself."

"You will write and get his consent? O son of my soul, write, and write words that would have persuaded the crucifying Jews to hold their murderous hands. Write as if all the universe were in feud till that answer came. It is in truth my world which is bounded in that letter, and if it fails—the great and awful day, the last, may come, I care not how soon."

Poor child! she was wound up to so high a pitch, that the strings cracked, as it were, and all at once her strength gave way. With a loud torrent of sobs she fell almost senseless into Wriottesley's arms.

He could only kiss her wet cheek again and again, and murmur in her ear the soft words of a language rich in tender expressions.

But Lola soon recovered herself.

"You will write, *Paco*?"

"At once."

"And will show me his answer?"

"Yes."

"Whichever way it is?"

"It can only be one answer. He has but to know you, and he could not hold out a single instant. But what has led to all this? Who has told you of my uncle?"

"My own grandfather."

"Don Mariano! then *he* knows?"

"Everything. How, I cannot tell; but you remember how unexpectedly he returned yesterday? He came in here just as you had gone, and taxed me with encouraging your attentions. I did not deny it.

"And then?"

"He commanded me to give you up. I refused; and then he told me a story—a sad, sad story—of a girl like me, here upon this big Rock, who, alas for her! attracted the attention of one an officer, an English officer here, it may be such as you are my *Paco*. She fled with her lover, deserting her father—an unfor-

fortunate, who had no other child alive—fled, to find herself one day neglected, abandoned, left alone perhaps to die upon a foreign shore. Francisco, that girl was my mother.”

“Gracious God! Lola, do you deem me capable too of such villainy as this? If so, we had better part to-day, this hour.”

“Have I said I doubted you? No, *Paco*,” said Lola, drawing herself up proudly. “I have that faith and trust in you, my heart’s choice, that I would go forth this instant, my hand in yours, out into the world, confiding in your honor as I do in my own.”

“And she was your mother! Did you know her?”

“She died as I was born. But you cannot wonder now that my grandfather should detest the class to which you belong, and that he should refuse to entertain your suit.”

“He knows I am a gentleman.”

“Yes; and for that reason distrusts your intentions. But even that I could overcome. My *abuelo* is not proof against my coaxing;” and once again she broke into her merry laugh. “And he felt he was not safe, so he played a stronger card—your uncle.”

“And yet we will beat it. I will write to-night a letter that would melt a stone.”

“You think you will succeed?”

“I am sure of it.”

“Then go and write: do not delay.”

“In fourteen days at latest the answer will be here. Then I will beard Don Mariano in his den, and marry you in spite of him and all the world.”

“Fourteen days—it seems an age. And not to see you all that time!”

“How?”

“My grandfather has forbidden me to see you ever again. This meeting he knows of, and allowed, on condition only that it should be the last. He threatens to set a watch on me, and that if we are found together he will send me to a convent in the North of Spain.”

“And yet we shall meet again, Lolita, I think—once again, at least.”

“Only once!” cried Lola, pouting.

“Yes, once; but that will be for always.”

CHAPTER XIV.

A DARK HORSE.

THOUGH cheerful and confident while speaking to Lola, Frank, left to himself, was not very hopeful of success with his uncle. Remembering Sir Hector's deep prejudices, he knew that it would be difficult to talk him over. The old gentleman was a rigid stickler for class distinctions; any *mésalliance* that came under his notice he vehemently denounced. He was, moreover, extremely sensitive on the subject of his personal authority. That his nephew and chosen heir should contemplate matrimony without taking his uncle's opinion first, would be counted as rank insubordination. And the old man was obstinate. He seldom recanted an opinion once given; his decisions must be accepted as final. He admitted no argument; any fresh pleading or effort at persuasion annoyed him and hardened him in his resolves.

So, with grave misgivings, Frank sat down to write. Though he used all the glowing colors a lover has generally at command, he feared that the picture he had to paint would be little likely to find favor. But he could not stoop to misrepresent matters. So much did he dread the imputation of deceit, that he stated his case perhaps more unreservedly than was prudent. A man less honest and outspoken would have glossed over certain points and embellished others. It was open to him to lay stress upon the glorious ancestry of the Bellotas, keeping in the background the shifts to which the head of the house had been driven to keep body and soul together. He might have dilated upon the beauty of Lola—as in truth he did, but in a modest and sensible fashion—without proclaiming too loudly that she spoke English indifferently and that she had no experience of the manners and customs of the best English people. But Frank was no special pleader; his language, blunt and uncompromising, tended to make the light dark, and the dark as black as night.

And yet the girl he proposed to marry was good enough in all conscience—a prize any man might be proud to win. What! despise Dolores Bellota because, forsooth, she was not born in England, brought up in certain grooves, trained to hold certain views, to be shallow-hearted, perhaps mercenary, her natural feelings overlaid and smothered by the false teachings of a calculating mother, and the pernicious practices of our modern high-pressure life? In her own native modesty and guilelessness she was incomparably superior to half the bluest-blooded belles reared in the artificial atmosphere of this wicked work-a-

day world. At the core she was of better stuff, and would soon obviously gain as much polish. In appearance she was able to cope with the best of them.

Had it been possible to smuggle Lola into Grimswych Hall about breakfast time, before Sir Hector appeared, her success would have been assured. She was fit to reign in a palace. She walked every inch a queen. Sir Hector would have been disarmed, discomfited. Not unmindful of the sad shipwreck of his own affection, the old gentleman was really disposed to be tender towards the heart-aches of others. His life had been made miserable by ill-considered opposition. With more judicious handling he might have agreed even to this seemingly unsuitable match. But Frank had injured his own case by the way he stated it; and then, on the top of the angry mistrustfulness already aroused in Sir Hector's mind, came Mrs. Sproule's anonymous letter. Although his upright soul recoiled from giving credence to such irresponsible reports, he could not reject the information entirely. He thought that he saw in it more independent, more trustworthy criticism upon the girl of Frank's choice, than Frank himself could be relied upon to give. A lover's phrases must always be divided by two or more. Frank, in his studious care to be honest, had not indeed embarked upon any very glowing praise, and this was turned against him: he clearly could not say much himself for his choice. So Sir Hector declared at once that it would never do. The thing must be stopped peremptorily and forever.

Therefore he wrote, forbidding the match in the plainest terms. But his letter was not unkind.

"I had thought," he said, "my dear Francis, that you valued my good opinion, yet it seems exactly the reverse. You are courting my serious displeasure. I have never concealed from you that it would be greatly to my satisfaction to see you married—as soon as you pleased. But I thought I had made it equally plain that I expected my heir to make choice of a gentlewoman who might in due course become the fitting mistress of my house. Had your intended bride been a lady and no more, yet one of your own station in life, I should have been more than content to welcome her, though she came with no other fortune than herself. I could have made you independent, and I trust happy, until I was gone. But this person upon whom you have set your affections is—believe me, Francis, I am well informed—quite unworthy to be your wife. She is in no respects your equal; her relations are discreditable, her education has been neglected, and she is but imperfectly acquainted with the English tongue. The idea of accepting this girl as a suitable match for the man I have made my heir is utterly preposterous—not to be tolerated for a single second.

"I will not stoop, my dear boy, to threaten. Thank Heaven, our relations have hitherto been more than friendly. I think you have some regard for me, some respect for my advice and for my wishes. Do not, Francis, be misled by a slight and fleeting passion into an act which will entail much inconvenience to yourself, and much unhappiness to me."

A letter this which gave our hero food for thought. He was fond of his uncle, grateful to him for much kindness, and the bare prospect of breaking with him, even upon such a vital question, was a severe wrench. But though vexed and torn by the conflicting emotions his love for Lola entailed, he never faltered in his devotion to her. Uncle or no uncle, grandfather or no grandfather, Frank swore aloud that he had won his Lola, and meant to wear her.

Nevertheless he dreaded the next meeting with the girl of his heart. Lola would insist upon knowing the whole truth, and how could he hope to conceal it? She had said that if Sir Hector was unfavorable to their engagement, it must cease. Would she be resolute in her decision? Possibly, nay probably; for the lady had a spirit of her own, as her lover knew full well. He only hoped that her objections might be overruled.

Pepe, whom he had sent to Josefa to ascertain when it would be possible to arrange a meeting, returned with a very long face. This face, indeed, was capable of expressing on occasion woe enough to furnish a stock-in-trade for half the undertakers' mutes in London. Now he put forth his nether lip and hung his head, as Spaniards do when bearers of bad news, till the sadness of his visage might have turned all the goats'-milk on Gibraltar.

"You've been a monstrous long time away," exclaimed his master, petulantly.

Pepe did not answer. He merely moved his hands outwards in a deprecating fashion, and pursed his lips together the tighter.

"Are you dumb?"

"Into the shut mouth flies do not enter," replied Pepe.

"Confound your proverbs! What is the answer? Where can I see her, and when?"

"My mother is here."

"Has she brought any message? Bring her in, you miserable jackanapes, and don't make such grimaces."

With that Josefa entered. But the mother was more aggravating than the son. The moment she saw Frank, she dropped into a chair with a wild torrent of woful exclamations—"Ay!" "Ay!" "Oh—e!" "*Que lastima!*" "Holy Virgin!" and so forth, while Frank fumed with impatience, and was for shaking the old fool into a more sensible humor; but she kept

him at arm's-length with her fan, and groaned and grunted as if she were confessing her sins. Through it all Pepe did the dutiful. It was ludicrous to see the man slobbering in concert, calling his mother endearing names—"Mamma of my soul," "*Mamila*" (little mother), although she weighed some fifteen stone or more. At length Josefa recovered sufficiently to mention the señorita's name.

"Dolores—ay! *Dolorcita de mi corazon—ay!*"

"In Heaven's name, what has happened?" cried Frank, nearly beside himself.

"She has gone!" It came out plump and unexpectedly.

"Gone! whither?"

"I know not, good gentleman of my heart. I fear me evil has come upon her. The señorita has disappeared."

Then, as if he were drawing her wisdom teeth one by one, Frank extracted from Josefa that a messenger had come, a few days back, post-haste from Cadiz, from Don Mariano, who had gone thither on business, to say that the old man was at death's door. Lola must hurry to him if she would see him again alive. She had gone; and now Don Mariano had returned alone. He refused obstinately to say what had become of his granddaughter. More, he had now given Josefa her *congé*, and the good lady was ready to enter Frank's service if he wished. She would keep house for him, cook, sew, serve him faithfully and with all her heart.

"Thank you!" said Frank, dryly. "I am not in need of a housekeeper." Although he had profited by Josefa's treachery, he had conceived no high estimate of her character.

"Then must I starve, wretched woman that I am! It is thus that he requites these years of faithful devotion. But he is *mala sombra*, black-hearted, and who can tell what he has done with this poor innocent child? He has sent her—ay! what do I know?—perchance to the other world."

"No, not quite that," said Frank. "He would not harm her, even in his rage."

He paused then, lost in doubt at this new complication. Should he follow Lola? Ay! but where? To search for her in Cadiz would be simply waste of time. Don Mariano had doubtless laid his plans so as to elude all chances of immediate pursuit.

"Your master—I mean, Don Mariano—is he here?" asked Frank of Josefa.

"*Sí, señor.* He returned last night."

"Where shall I find him?"

"*Por Dios, señor,* do not go to him—he is like a madman—for sure he will do you some serious mischief."

"No fear of that I think; I am well able to take care of myself. Where is he?"

"At Crutchett's Ramp, as is his wont from day to day."

So to Crutchett's Ramp Frank forthwith repaired. Toiling up the long staircase-street, and elbowing his way among the crowd, he presently stood at Bellota's door.

The place was much as it had been for many years past—a shallow room like a good-sized box, across which ran a counter, and on this a glass case or two full of Moorish jewelry. Behind this a hole into a yet smaller den where Don Mariano kept his doubloons.

"Is 'the Viscount' in?" asked Frank at the threshold.

"Yes: Viscount in, Viscount in, who wantee Viscount?" replied Bellota from within; and then as Frank entered, seeing an officer in uniform the old man, with an eye to business, bowed low and began to rub his hands.

"You do not seem to know who I am?" went on Frank.

"I do, sare, I do. I know you perfectly. I am glad to see you, sare." He did not know Frank from Adam.

"What you want, sare? Tobacco, segars, furniture, money? This is the right shop. I serve you well, I serve you well last time and so you come again."

Bellota was so eager, he came out from behind the counter and stood at Frank's side.

"You are mistaken. I have never been inside your shop before. My name is Wriottesley. Francis Wriottesley. Now, do you know me?"

"Wriottesley!" said Bellota once or twice, turning the difficult mouthful over as if to taste it, and then with a sudden gesture he spat it as a poisonous unsavory morsel, far into a corner of the shop.

This was then the lover of Lola. And as Bellota looked up furtively at the young man, and noted his manly frame, bright eyes and open brow, he saw that he was indeed such an one as takes a maiden's fancy. It would be difficult to wean her from her love for such a fellow as this.

But while he gazed, his eye caught Frank's, and the latter spoke again, slowly but earnestly in Spanish.

"Do you know why I have come hither, señor Bellota?"

The old man waved a dignified negative with one hand and placed the other in his sash. He was no longer the cringing shop-keeper, but a man meeting an equal upon equal terms. Outwardly cool and collected but with rage at his heart; like a duelist with his mortal enemy at last just at sword's length.

"I have come to speak to you as a friend. I have indeed."

Seeing the other's eyes gleam as with undying hate, he went on, "Why are you so bitter against me?"

"I am bitter, but not, *señor oficial*, against you only. I hate all your accursed race; all, but mostly you who wear this scarlet cloth," said Bellota, touching Frank lightly on the sleeve.

"What have we done to deserve your hate?"

"What! By the blood of the Sainted Apostles do you ask me what? Was it not one of your eternally-to-be-roasted comrades who—but no, I will not touch on that. You say you have come as a friend. Go on, let me see the color of your friendship."

"I wish to be your friend, Bellota, I wish to be more. Why do you refuse my offer for Lola? She loves me; and I her. I am not poor, my prospects are good; I think she would be happy as my wife."

Frank spoke these simple words in Spanish, imperfectly in accent and idiom, but solemnly and impressively. A pang shot through Bellota's heart. This youth was of true stuff; it was plain in his fearless carriage and the ring of his deep and cheery voice. Might he not be trusted? Surely in his keeping Lola might be safe.

Such thoughts crossed Bellota's mind but for a second. The next he had driven them remorselessly back. Was he to falter in his purpose now after all these years, and throw to the winds the vows he had sworn? And then, these double-faced, treacherous Englishmen—they were deep, designing libertines. Doubtless that other who had brought his first Dolores to an early grave promised and prayed and made some such show as this young man before him. What guarantee had Bellota of Frank Wriottesley's good faith? Let his open demeanor and fair words convince whom they might, Mariano Bellota would not trust a single soul—least of all, an officer and an Englishman—on such simple security.

"I tell you, *señor*, that you waste your words. My granddaughter shall not wed you: never while I live, nor with my consent after I am dead."

"Will you give me no reason for your refusal?"

"Reasons I have, but they are my own private affair. I cannot lay open the hidden chambers of my heart to such as you."

"Nay, I know them. I have heard all from Lola. I cannot quarrel with you for your dislike to the class I represent. But we are not all, I trust, equally bad. The man who did you such a grievous wrong—"

"*Calla, señor*. Be silent. This subject cannot be discussed between you and me," said Bellota, drawing his cloak proudly round him as if to cover the tender spot he carried in his breast.

"You have had your answer. Now, I pray you, go. I am old and feeble; but little able to withstand a stormy interview like this."

"Let me beg of you, Don Mariano, to re-consider your decision. At least give me hope. Perhaps at some future day—"

"Never; it can never be."

"Then I tell you I will win her in your very teeth. What will it avail that you have spirited her off, heaven knows where? I must and will find her, though I hunt all over the world."

"Try, *señor oficial*—try your best. I think she is safely hidden," and as he uttered these words his face broke into a pale smile.

With a heavy heart Frank took his departure. So far he had failed miserably. But the matter was not to end here. Find Lola he would, sooner or later, no matter what obstacles might intervene. He was eager to be up and stirring; inaction at such a time is intolerable to impetuous men. His impulse was to hurry off to Cadiz, to Madrid, Paris, to the North Pole if needs be. But after much cogitation he could not see how at present his pursuit was to be made aught but the vainest wild-geese-chase. He was still entirely without a clew. Lola, they said, had gone to Cadiz; but had she remained there, had she gone there at all? It was better to wait rather than follow on a false scent. Possibly ere long, through Josefa or Pepe, or it might be from Lola herself, more certain news might reach him.

And there were reasons to keep him just then upon the Rock. The time of the Spring Race meeting was now approaching, and the due preparation of the Bat for this important event would at any other time have entirely engrossed his thoughts. Even now, with the image of Lola forever before his eyes, he could not forget how much depended upon the success of his horse.

Frank had never troubled himself much about money, because his uncle's liberal allowance had sufficed for all his needs. If perchance he found himself a little dipped, the mere mention of the fact brought by return a satisfactory check. But now—just when his relations with Sir Hector were for the first time somewhat constrained—Frank remembered that he had considerably overdrawn his account, and that if the Bat missed the Barb Maiden, a financial crisis was extremely probable. He had been throwing his money about, as young men are apt to do when they know they can have as much as they please by simply asking for it. Gibraltar is proverbial among soldiers as one of the most expensive stations at which a regiment can be quartered. It is a cheerful, light-hearted, hospitable place, where messes keep open house to all comers, and where a dozen institutions flourish—all estimable, of course, but requiring substantial funds for their support. A pack of hounds kept by the garrison, a race meeting every few months, theatricals, library,

club—the careless liver who is generously disposed will have his hand always in his pocket.

Frank Wriottesley was one of the most prominent men in his regiment, and their representative upon all occasions. The post was one of honor, but it entailed considerable outlay, which grew into extravagance, as practiced by the thoughtless heir of Sir Hector Harrowby. He found himself, therefore, much shorter of money out here upon the Rock than he had ever been at home; and at a moment when he was already straitened, came the purchase of the Bat at a very long price. Indeed, to provide the two hundred and fifty pounds required, Frank had been compelled to have recourse to a local usurer, who was in reality a creature of Don Mariano's. At any other time a few lines to his uncle's man of business would have solved the difficulty, but Frank could not bring himself to ask a favor of Sir Hector now. He laid all his hopes upon his horse, and backed him heavily wherever he could get a chance.

In racing matters, Tony Sproule was, of course, his sworn ally, though not exactly his partner. The astute Tony was willing enough to give the benefit of his advice, and to profit by the judicious investment of his friend's capital, but he did not contribute a farthing towards the purchase of the Bat. Yet he might have been its owner, so anxious was he to make a certainty of the race. He knew the horse was an out and out good one; all that remained was to turn this knowledge to profitable account.

Racing is a very favorite amusement at Gibraltar. From necessity a horse is kept by every one who can afford it, and by a great many who can not. There are no roads suitable for wheels, and those who would travel or take the air must go in the saddle or on foot. It needs but little to foster an Englishman's love of horseflesh into a passion, and at Gibraltar every one has his stable, from His Excellency the Governor down to the newly-fledged ensign with barely one ten-pound note to pay for his mount. If we English people have horses we seem compelled to match them one against the other. So the hacks of the Gibraltar garrison were raced by their owners first in happy-go-lucky fashion and then with increased pomp and circumstance till the chance gallops of two and three together grew into a regular meeting with grand stand, race cards, and a crowded ring. In their way, and to those concerned, Gibraltar races were to the full as interesting and important as the great events at home. The Derby, it is true, might be run a little faster, and more money might be won or lost upon the Cæsarwitch or the Cambridgeshire, but such things are great or small only by comparison with the interests involved. At Gibraltar the favorites

mights be slow as tops, but they were mostly the personal friends of their owners; and the bets that backed them were of quite as much consequence to those making them as the more ambitious operations of sportsmen on the English turf. There is not much difference between plunging in pence or pounds, if in either case you jeopardize more than you can well afford to lose.

In the years of which I am writing, the spirit of speculation was strong amongst the youngsters on the Rock. Sproule, with a quick eye to his own profit, had noticed this, and resolved to turn it to his own account. Gibraltar properly worked promised to prove to him a mine of wealth. All he had required was some "good thing" as a basis for his operations; this he felt he had secured by Frank's possession of the Bat.

Sproule's ways were always tortuous. He preferred to gain his ends by underhand practices, rather than by treading the open path. His proclivities came to the front now in his manner of maneuvering the Bat. Even at the outset Frank and he had words. Our hero rebelled against all that savored of chicanery; and it was with the greatest reluctance that he consented to let Sproule carry out his plans. There was no fraud intended, of course, but there was a suspicion of trickery. Sproule said it was no more than the most noteworthy trainers in England approved, and after some more talk Frank suffered himself to be convinced—at least, although ashamed at heart, he gave no active opposition to the scheme.

Sproule's great object was to keep the outside public in the dark as to the real capabilities of the Bat. A stable was hired half-way to San Roque, where the horse lay *perdu*; no one saw him, not even in clothing. Like his namesake he came out only after dark; he took his gallops on the beach at midnight, and his exercise before daybreak and after sundown, when no one was about to notice him. Pepe was in constant attendance, and had gained the implicit confidence of Frank and Sproule; not that there was any attempt to conceal the horse's existence. On the contrary, it was essential he should be known and talked of—all that Sproule wished was that he should be talked of as barely worth his barley. When asked about Frank's Ximena, Sproule replied contemptuously that he was a poor little weed hardly able to carry one of his boots. For some time this depreciation produced the desired effect. It was easy to get very long odds against the Bat. But as time passed, suspicion began to raise its head. If this dark horse was no good, why then so much secrecy? Sproule's character was not unknown, and there were many in the garrison who distrusted him. As this talk gained ground it became difficult to keep the Bat down in the betting.

Sproule therefore resolved to change his tactics. The horse was brought into Frank's stable privately;—but as a great secret several people were told of it one after another, till soon it was no secret at all. And now as the excitement grew, Pepe was besieged by applications. He pocketed dollars by the dozen, and yet he stood firm. His place was a good one, he said, and he wished to keep it. Besides when he informed his master and Sproule that people had tried to tamper with him, the latter laughed, and gave him full permission to get all he could out of the enemy.

"Look here, you can tell them a bit of news, Pepe," said Sproule, leering at the groom with his wicked black eyes half closed. "We're going to have a trial—ain't we, Wriottesley? A trial between the Bat and the Druid. But if any one wants to see it he must get up the night before."

"And may I tell them that, señor?"

"You can tell them there's to be a trial on the North Front Course, at gun fire, some day this week, and the favor of their attendance is particularly requested. Ain't it Frank?"

Frank laughed, not over easily. These subtleties were repugnant to his nature, he would gladly have washed his hands of the whole affair; but he was too far involved.

Pepe took the hint. It was worth a small fortune to him.

A few days later the turf wisecracks might be seen winking and nudging and nodding to one another all over the place. Smith of the Slashers whispered to Smythe of the Crashers that something dark was to come off the next day. Smythe told Smithson of the Bombardiers, quite in confidence, and Smithson confided it only to his personal friends. In this way the news spread like wild-fire, and every sportsman in the place was all agog to see the trial.

The race course at Gibraltar lies beyond the fortress gates, on a flat expanse of land called "the North Front" which is part of the Neutral Ground, though within the British Lines. The grave-yard for the town, which is extra-mural, is situated at one end of this North Front, and is encircled partly by the course. Parallel to another part of the course are gardens with a high hedge of aloe and prickly pear. The kennels of the Calpe hounds lie close to the grave-yard, and near them are the slaughter-houses of the garrison commissariat. Straight above this North Front level rises the steep scarped rock, like the wall of a giant house, pierced here and there with holes,—the embrasures of the galleries hewn out of the solid stone.

Sproule chose for the trial a day when he and Frank mounted the North Front guard.

Towards sundown, the two horses, well cloaked and hooded,

were brought by Pepe and lodged for the night in the guard-room stables. Spies soon spread the news; indeed, the first news came from Pepe himself. The "touts" laid their plans accordingly. Smithson, who was a gunner, concealed himself in one of the galleries; Smith went out to Catalan Bay for the night; Smythe, who was a whip to the Calpe hounds, lodged at the kennels; Greystone, of the Commissariat, stationed himself in the *abattoir*; last of all little Phipps, having no special facilities to his hand, took a railway rug and a flask and bivouacked among the tombstones. In this way one and all were independent of the gates, which were only opened about daybreak at the firing of the morning gun.

Apparently quite unconscious that he was overlooked, Sproule might be seen in the gray light jogging quietly away from his guard about five. He rode a small, low horse, carefully clothed, but apparently well proportioned and of good action. Behind him came Pepe on the big English horse which Sproule had brought from home. Every one knew the Druid by sight, and it might be said by heart. By this time his pace had been gauged to a hair's breadth.

Presently Frank joined them from the New North Front guard. He was on foot, and walked briskly along with the horses. Down by the gardens they halted, the clothing was removed, all but the hoods; Frank got up on Druid, and the two horses were cantered once slowly round the course. All the watchers were on the *qui vive*. Smithson with a night-glass could barely make out the figures of the horses, but little Phipps, wedged in between the monument to General Don and the last tribute of Rabbi Bensaken to his devoted Miriam, greedily devoured the whole affair with his eyes.

The second round the horses were evidently put out at greater speed; but at the third round came the real trial at racing pace.

To the surprise of all the lookers on, Frank won easily. He was holding Druid hard, while Sproule who got about two stone at least, was flagging from the guard-house to the finish. Coming down the Straight by the Stand, Sproule with the Bat was a couple of hundred yards behind.

So much for the great and mysterious trial. It entirely upset all the preconceived theories of those who watched. They knew that if Druid, with Frank up, could beat the Bat ridden by a light-weight like Sproule, the latter could not go within a mile of the Barb Maiden race. One and all therefore, after their long vigil, returned delighted to their various barracks and continued to lay heavily against the horse.

Sproule only laughed in his sleeve. The trial was nothing

but a hoax from beginning to end. It was not the Bat which ran, but another horse somewhat similar in appearance borrowed on purpose from Ximena. From this time forth there was no need to keep the Bat a dark horse. He sank so low in the popular estimation that Sproule was highly pleased.

Not so Frank Wriottesley. Each step took him further and further upon the wrong road; every hour he wished more and more to break altogether with the Sproules. He began to detest the man's hard cunning; he could not disguise his dislike for the woman who had dared to speak of Lola in disparaging terms. Had he known of the anonymous letter, a rupture would have been inevitable of course. But at present, at least till the race was over, he could not bring himself to quarrel with them outright.

After that he hoped to shake himself free from all entanglements, and take up the search upon which his future happiness seemed to depend.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BARB MAIDEN.

ONE fine morning in this month of March, Frank jogs leisurely down from the barracks at the south end of the Rock towards the North Front, whither his string of racers has already preceded him.

The sun strikes hot, although it is early in the year. But spring is precocious in these southern latitudes, and has blossomed already into beauty of bud, and leaf, and flower. As Frank starts from his quarters he nearly stumbles over the Maltese goat-herd who has brought out his milk in nature's cart—in the goats themselves, that is to say, and milks them for you before your eyes. Frank leaves his soldier-servant to chaffer in gibberish about the price of a pint, and rides on. The atmosphere is so still and clear that you can count the houses in Ceuta over the way upon the African continent, and see into every cave and fissure at the bottom of Apes' Hill. There are few sounds abroad—a distant bugle, a drummer at practice, or the howl of a soldier's child, which is being skelped by its mother for attempting suicide over a cliff. Frank passes next a gang of convicts at work early upon a new battery, and almost involuntarily quickens his pace; for inoffensive wayfarers ere now have been assaulted in a sudden access of fury by one of these gentlemen in drab.

Now as he enters the Europa Pass and gets closer under the

Rock, the air is hotter and yet more calm. Emerging next upon the upper road, he sees below him to the left the whole surface of the wide Bay, and catches over the tops of the purple mountains a glimpse of the gray Atlantic beyond. The bay is filled with shipping: coal-hulks, steamers, lateen crafts. A Russian man-of-war is steaming slowly in from the Straits, and rounding to, drops anchor just in front of the fortress. Bang go her guns; right, left: as if she were bombarding the towns on both sides of the bay, and the smoke she makes rises gradually, till, all but her topmasts, she is covered up and hidden from sight. Next minute there is a bustle and hurrying to and fro below at Jumper's Bastion, whence come swarming up a crowd of gunners to man the guns of the saluting battery. Bang, bang, gun for gun in return, while the fortress hoists the Russian flag to emphasize the compliment; and thus with much expenditure of powder, the dignity of nations is punctiliously maintained.

Frank meanwhile rides on; meeting next an ambulance full of sick bound for the military hospital, the water-carts busy in every street, guards marching to the relief of others, fatigue-parties in undress, firing-parties, and a whole battalion returning from early drill. As he reaches Waterport Street he begins to breast a stream of people pouring into the town: Spanish hawkers having leave, or day-permits, to enter our gates; the *élite* of the merchants riding in from their country-houses at Campomento, San Roque, or the Lines. With most Frank exchanges salutations; he is already well known in the place. Here comes the Post-master; next the Spanish consul; next a high dignitary of the Romish Church; next Black Charlie, the representative of the Sultan of Morocco, who was once a slave in the heart of Africa, and is now as rich as Croesus. Frank's hand is forever to his hat, as he greets his friends sometimes with a friendly nod, now with a grave bow, again with the official three fingers returning the salutes of stationary sentries or soldiers passing by.

But now he is clear of the town; and crossing "the Inundation," a large artificial lake which protects the base of the lower lines, he jogs through the Bayside Barrier and joins others bound on a like errand with himself—Smith, and Smythe, and Smithson, all swelling with importance, as though the eyes of Europe were upon them. They talk only in monosyllables, such reserve being in accordance with traditions of the turf, and they dread to let slip a scrap of intelligence which might be useful to others. Around Frank they congregate with affection; our hero is an authority, an "owner" and a sportsman of note. Still more do they hang upon the utterance of Sproule, whom they find already upon the course. He is seated with one leg thrown over the

pommel of his saddle, and negligently drinking a cup of coffee while he listens to the gossip around. Greystone is explaining a new course of treatment which he is practicing upon a sickly horse.

"It is first-rate medicine, steel—I give him steel."

"Oh, do you," cried Sproule, the high nasal tones of his sharp voice having much the sound of an untuned fiddle. "And how do you give it?"

"In a ball, hot."

"That's not the way. I'll tell you how you ought to give steel—at least to such a first-class animal as yours."

The others crowd round to listen. Sproule is an oracle upon such matters.

"How, Sproule?"

"Give it him cold—with the blade of a knife, right across the jugular. That's about all the brute deserves. Then send him to the kennels; but I doubt whether the hounds'd eat him."

This sally was received with a roar of laughter, in the midst of which Sproule trotted off, exchanging only a short "Morning, Frank," with Wriottesley as he passed.

These early gatherings upon the course were numerously attended. All the sportsmen are there; others glad of an excuse for rising betimes; a sprinkling of ladies too and among them Mrs. Sproule. She was now the centre of a little knot of men, discussing with them the forthcoming events; and sitting up straight on her small horse which was as neat at every point as she was herself. Her dark-gray habit fitted admirably; her pale hair was smooth and shiny as satin; round her neck was a kerchief of dead white silk, as a protection against the morning air, of course, but perhaps, also, because it served to heighten the freshness of her clear white complexion. She looked as spick and span as if she were just out of a bandbox. In this respect she was a curious contrast to her husband, who prided himself on the *négligé* of his attire. He seldom wore a waistcoat, and his seedy shooting-jacket could not conceal the raggedness of his flannel shirt, on which he generally fastened a paper collar. But his breeches and boots were really workman-like and serviceable. They were perfectly "turned out," and might have grown upon him, so completely did they seem part and parcel of his figure.

Sproule was not seen much with his wife in public. She rode down with some chosen cavalier, and back again under the same escort. It might have struck a stranger that there was no very great bond of union between husband and wife, yet, as we know, she was deep in all his secrets, and often helped not a little in his plans.

"And what about the Bat?" asked one of the men near her.

"Whose horse is that?" she asked with admirable unconcern. "I do not seem to know the name."

"Not Frank Wriottesley's horse? Why Mrs. Sproule—"

"Here is Mr. Wriottesley to answer for himself," said Mrs. Sproule, quite calmly. "Have you got a horse called the Bat?" she went on, addressing Frank.

Our hero laughed in spite of himself, and the others joined.

"Mrs. Sproule, we're all early risers now, but we must get up earlier still to catch you napping," said an admirer.

"You are really very complimentary, Major Green. But how about the entry of Slow Coach for the Maiden? You are a steward. Is the Arab to be allowed to run?"

"Well, they've brought him all the way from Egypt, the Slashers have, for you know he's a regimental horse, and it seems hard—"

"Isn't it harder upon us?" cried another, interposing. "We've our own little nags, which we ride about for our own amusement, and we race them one against the other, and we like the fun, and we put together a few pounds to make a little sport, and then fellows want to come down upon us with pure bred Arabs which would carry everything before them. I protest against it, and I hope that Slow Coach will not be allowed to run."

"He will be heavily handicapped."

"Bless you, an out and out Arab could gallop away from our tits, even if he had the whole Rock of Gibraltar upon his back."

"For my part," said Mrs. Sproule, "I like to see so much enterprise. The more of it, the better for the race meeting."

"Will you give us the odds on Slow Coach?"

"What is he at? Even money?"

"No, no, Mrs. Sproule, not quite that. I'll take your three to two."

"You must go to my husband, Captain Smithson. He does not allow me to bet."

"What will he take about the Bat?"

"You had better ask him. About 500 to 1, I expect. If there is such a horse, that is to say, which I rather doubt."

"There is indeed, Mrs. Sproule," said Frank, who had listened with a certain disgust to her artless conversation. Of course she was playing some game; she and Tony always were. Frank wished from the bottom of his heart that he might never have a hand in any more of their games. "There is indeed, and there he goes with Sproule upon his back."

The Bat was being "sweated" in heavy clothing, under which he was almost concealed from view, so that the bystanders could get no clear notion as to his real value. The

pace too at which he traveled was only a steady canter; the public wanted to see the horse gallop again. That trial at day-break was all very well, but already there were half a dozen different accounts of it abroad. Besides, perhaps the Bat was just then in "bad form," and there was no knowing what dead weight he carried. Sproule was deep enough for anything. So the public hoped for another chance—which they never got. Somehow the horse was never put out to the full stretch, not at least when anybody was by. Everybody about him was as close as the tomb. Wriottesley's open nature seemed suddenly changed. Sproule it was hopeless to fathom. Pepe the groom, who never left the horse day or night, might be a double-dealing rascal, but was apparently loyal.

It must be confessed, however, that Sproule himself was not over well pleased with the progress of affairs. He had got his money on quite as he had wished, and everything promised well, till suddenly the importation of Slow Coach, the Slasher's Arab, upset all his calculations. Unlike Sproule, they made no mystery about their horse; and Sproule, being one of the first to recognize his undoubted powers, saw that the race was no longer "a moral" for the Bat. Nevertheless the little horse was game; if he could be brought "fit" to the post all might yet be well. This question was one on which Sproule was continually fidgeting.

This very morning as he rode back with Frank, he hinted with a scowl that the Bat seemed a little out of sorts.

"I don't quite like his looks, Wriottesley. After that gallop he was as soft as butter, and he shook all over. Does he eat all his corn?"

"Every grain. He has a devil of an appetite. The manger is always as smooth as my hand."

"You go sometime to see him feed?"

"Often—not just this week, that is to say."

"So that Pepe has been having it all his own way?"

"Yes."

Sproule mused for a moment.

"You trust that fellow, eh?"

"Well, I do. He seems so wrapped up in the horse."

"He'll sell us a dog yet."

"I don't think he would willingly hurt the Bat, though he might not be so particular about injuring us. I do trust him."

"And I don't. For the matter of that I don't trust any one, least of all a low-livered son of a sea-cook like this. He must be watched. The horse must be made as safe as we can make him."

Frank had two stables: one a rough and ready sort of place

adjoining the barracks where he kept the hacks that did all his rough work. Muldoon, a soldier servant, looked after them. The Bat and another, both more valuable, stood at a stable he had hired not far from Rosia. His object had been to get near Lola; and the stable was a sufficient excuse for his hanging about the neighborhood of Bellota's cottage. Pepe was head man at Rosia stable, living in a loft just above the horses.

There was a good deal of jealousy between Muldoon and Pepe. "Those Portingees were the meanest men out," Muldoon said, Spain and Portugal being convertible terms with him. "They'd fry slices off their grandmothers and ate 'um without pepper." But Pepe had the best of the battle. He was better paid, better dressed, more free to come and go where he pleased, and he had a more responsible charge. All of which Muldoon resented, prophesying that no good would come to his master from trusting this Papistical furrineering rogue.

"What do you think of the Bat, Muldoon?" The man had been with Frank for years and had proved himself a faithful slave. Frank knew he could rely upon him.

"He's a mighty nate little horse."

"How is he doing, do you think?"

"How can a dumb brute do with a Portingee that can't speak six words to him? It's my belief that Pepper"—this was his approximation to Pepe—"will ruin him clane."

"Why, Muldoon?"

"Is it why, sor? Sure, sor, the rogue won't give him a chance. Isn't he starving him under your very nose?"

"I can't think that."

"Do you buy much corn, sor? Ye do! Then it's yer own ye buy back, ye may take my word for that. But just watch, just see for yourself."

Frank took the hint, but although he waited and watched for several days, Pepe was too much for him. The man was always hovering about the Bat's loose box, and seemed to take an evident pleasure in Frank's visits during the hours of feeding. Therefore Wriottesley changed his tactics. He did not go near his stable again for several days, then suddenly appeared at them late one Sunday evening.

Pepe was on the point of leaving. He had a heavy bag in one hand, and as he issued forth he peered cunningly to either side.

Frank drew back and let the servant lead on; then followed towards the town. Pepe made rapidly along the Line Wall, then turned up into the Alameda gardens, where Frank overtook him.

"*Hola*, Pepe! going home?"

"*Sí*, señor, to see madam my mother," replied Pepe, taken aback. "She is now in the house of one Benarabá—"

"What have you there in that bag?"

"*Ropa*, clothes for the wash."

"Let me see—By George, I will!" cried Frank in English, snatching the bag.

It was full of barley.

"You villain! you have been robbing the Bat of his corn. By the heavens above, I'll break every bone in your body!"

Pepe protested, swore, explained. This was only a sample; he was taking it back to the corn contractor to be exchanged. But no excuses served him. Frank flogged him soundly with a hunting-crop, and threw him to the ground.

"Don't show yourself near me again, that's all, or you'll get as much more. Be off. I'll send your wages to your mother's."

Pepe, writhing with pain and rage, could not find his tongue; but as soon as Frank was gone, he rose to his feet and felt for his knife. It was there in his sash. Should he follow his master and use it? No; it might be dangerous. He would take some other but not less satisfactory revenge.

After this encounter the Bat was moved to the barracks, and Muldoon put in charge. Leave was obtained for him and another soldier to watch turn about, day and night. Sproule having heard of the fracas with Pepe, insisted on these precautions.

After this the Bat improved rapidly, confirming Sproule's suspicion that there had been foul play before.

Rumors, too, were rife that Slow Coach was in a critical condition. Sproule suspiciously hesitated to believe these reports. But the Arab had certainly a "dicky" leg which had not been improved by the hard galloping of the course, for the season had been unusually dry.

Before the race, Sproule came to Frank, radiant.

"It's all right, my covey. The coach has broken down. Wheel come off. Leg gone to the mischief, can't run on three, you know. Bat wins in a common canter. Lay all you've got on the little horse—I have: even to my shirt."

Sproule's shirts did not constitute very long odds.

Certainly there was reason to hope for the best. A few hours more would decide.

Pepe had not been seen since the beating. His mother, Josefa, herself notably reduced in circumstances, had come to Frank to upbraid him for his cruelty. Our hero received her but ungraciously.

"The child is ill—broken in heart and body. He will die. I shall see then how to make you pay for this."

"If he doesn't die quickly, he'd better keep out of my way. I'll give him as much as he got before, if I don't hand him over to the police to be dealt with as a common thief."

"My Pepe is no thief. We are *gente honrada*, respectable people," said Josefa, with a toss of her head.

"A tree is known by its fruits," said Frank. "Perhaps that was his own barley?"

"It was but to serve you that he took it. That robber Cor-tabolsas sent such poor grain that Pepe wished to have it changed."

"Tell that to my one-eyed aunt. I know a B from a bull's foot."

"Then, señor Ingles, his blood, and all that may befall him or you, or those belonging to you, be upon your head alone."

Frank told her that he was not alarmed at the prospect, and sent her about her business.

The last night before the races had now come, and Frank with Sproule paid a last visit to the Bat before he was made snug for the night. The horse was in high fettle, and everything promised well. Muldoon and Sproule's man, Jakers, were to divide the night, watch and watch, between them.

After a certain hour of the night you might almost take Gibraltar to be a city of the dead. It is under martial law, and but few persons are privileged then to wander at will through the streets and long lines of battery and fortification. No inhabitant or native resident can be abroad without a permit, which he must produce when called upon, and with it a lantern by which it may be perused, should any of the sentries perched upon every corner and coign of vantage care for a little light reading during the dreary midnight hours. The sentries are almost the sole movable things upon the Rock, and they themselves patrol their beats with slow and solemn tread, like ghosts. The few sounds abroad are sepulchral and mysterious; now and again comes a sharp summons to "halt," followed by a stern inquiry, "Who goes there?" Or there is a clatter of steel accoutrements, a rattle of chains as drawbridges are raised or lowered, and at long intervals every echo is awakened as the sentinel's melancholy refrain, "All's well," is borne in discordant cadence from post to post upon the breezes of the night.

It would seem that in a town thus watched and warded no evil-doer would dare to move. But, in truth, the whole is more the military machinery necessary to provide against surprise from an enemy by sea or land, than from the ravages of thieves or vagabonds within its walls. Those whom long practice has made familiar with all the ins and outs of the Rock, can easily avoid the various guard-houses and outlying sentries.

Thus it was that in the small hours a stealthy figure, which had passed unchallenged from the path above the South Barrack Mess House, crept without hinderance across the road and over the low wall against which abutted the roof of the stables where Wriottesley kept the Bat. This stable was little more than a shed, roughly roofed in with timbers. Through the chinks came the glimmer of a stable-lamp, and the visitor above—it was Pepe Picarillo—could plainly distinguish all objects within; first the form of the Bat, and then, close up against the manger, a man's figure, not exactly lying down, and yet not sitting up alert and erect. This man had a short black pipe in his mouth, and a horse-rug lay across his feet. It was Jakers the second watchman. Pepe had watched Muldoon out of the yard before he attempted to carry out his scheme. He knew something of the character of his old fellow-servants, and with whom he was most likely to succeed. This was not Pepe's first visit to the stables. He had come repeatedly in the same manner during the previous week or two, and had matured his plans carefully.

Presently the groom got up, shook himself, and went towards the door.

"Has he gone clane away, I wonder?" he remarked to himself. He was speaking of Muldoon. "He's mighty cunning. To think of him calling himself a Band of Hope Good Templar, and having a snug bottle of the stuff stowed away here on the shilf. Does he know who helps him to drain it, I wonder?" went on Jakers with a snigger. "He's that artful, he'll be back on me some night, and we'll have words."

All this was said at the stable door, which Jakers had opened to look cautiously around. Meanwhile Pepe quick as lightning had lifted one of the loose timbers of the roof, and with a hooked stick had lowered on to a ledge near the window a stone bottle of aguardiente. Long before Jakers had turned back from the door, Pepe's arm was withdrawn.

"It's gallus dry work and anxious too," said Jakers as he came back to the horse. "It ain't right to be drinking while on sentry, but I'd give something for a drain. I think I'll just look if its there. Not that I'm going to touch a drop. Not on sentry. There it is, sure enough. Leastways there's the bottle. Is it empty, I wonder? Shall I just look? That villain had the smell of drink upon him when he left this. I'll wager he's not left half a little drop."

By this time the bottle was off the shelf, the cork out, and Jakers was lost. The aroma of the aguardiente was too much for his frail nature.

"Now I call this kind. The bottle's nearly full—and not of

that rot-gut black strap, which they calls country wine, but of the best Hollands; Prime Hollands; tastes of carryaway seeds. I've tried most drinks. 'White-Eye' aint bad, nor Monongahela, nor fixed bayonets, nor new Jamayker; and Arrack goes well to the head, but give me Jack Spaniard and his aguardenty. It's short and sharp like the Colonel's word of command, and makes you straighten your back and drop your hand to your side."

Jakers was not idle while he talked. Between each sentence he tilted up the bottle and sucked at it with a will. Probably under ordinary circumstances a jar of aguardiente would hardly have sufficed to upset so well seasoned a head. But Pepe left nothing to chance. He had made assurance doubly sure by drugging the drink with a strong dose of opium. This in time produced the desired effect. Jakers after struggling with his drowsiness soon sank into a peaceful slumber. Now was Pepe's opportunity. To tear off a plank and spring into the stable was the work of a moment. In one hand he carried a twitch, in the other a "ball." The horse was soon powerless to resist, and Pepe easily administered the dose. Then with a dark look he muttered between his teeth:

"Blow for blow. *Maldito rubio!*" undid the latch of the door and quietly stole away.

He was not a minute too soon. Almost immediately afterwards Sproule walked into the stable.

Jakers lay as he had fallen, snoring heavily. Sproule without rousing the man turned and looked at the Bat. The horse seemed restless and uneasy.

"I could swear I saw a shadow pass by me as I came into the yard," said Sproule. "If so I'm too late. This brute has been asleep some time. Well, my beauty"—this to the Bat—"how goes it? Soho! Gently!"

He passed his hand over the white nostrils. They were tender to the touch, and slightly marked.

"The twitch. It's been on him, half a minute ago. Then the mischief's done. You infernal scoundrel!" hissed Sproule, shaking his fist at the unconscious Jakers. "What shall we do to you? You should be hanged, drawn and quartered. Here, wake—"

He was on the point of kicking at the recumbent figure, but suddenly he paused. "Shall I? Why should he know anything about it? The pot's upset—yes. But can't I pull anything out of the fire?"

This seemed to give him so much food for thought that he sat down on a bucket and chewed a straw for fully half an hour. Then he got up and left the stable.

Next morning when Frank came down, he found the Bat looking bad. Nor was Jakers as bright as he might have been. But then the man was always thick-headed and stupid, and a vigil of half the night was not calculated to quicken his halting intellect.

Frank went on to the Garden of Eden, and saw the Sproules.

"What cheer?" cried Tony. "You look off your chump. How's the tit?"

"Well, I don't know what to say. Not quite right, I fear."

Tony became grave on the spot.

"They watched him—all night?"

"Oh, yes: as they have done all last week."

"They're square, I suppose?"

"I'd go bail for Muldoon."

"And I for Jakers. But let's go down and see the horse. Come too, Janita. Your head's not made of putty."

A close inspection of the Bat was not exactly satisfactory. He was sweating and his eyes looked heavy. But Sproule said pretty confidently, "He'll do right enough, I think; keep up your pluck, Frank. I mean to win."

Three or four hours later, the saddling-bell is ringing: the military policemen are busy clearing the course; the mimic ring alongside the tiny grand stand is agitated like a tempest-torn tea-cup. Voices rise high: "3 to 2 on the Bat," "Even money on the Bat," the Bat, the Bat, and nothing but the Bat.

Again the bell rings, and the horses take their preliminary canter.

"There goes the Bat! There! There!"

In truth a nice little horse. But does he quite do credit to his trainer's skill? "A little stale," says dapper Jim Atkinson, the huntsman, who has attended other meetings besides those at Calpe, to the Governor's coachman, a portly, gray-headed gentleman of long experience. The other winks and whispers, "He'll sell some of 'em a dog—and a bad dog, or I'm not worth a stable fork." But still the horse is high in the betting to the last; at the post, when the starter's flag is down, when the horses are past the Gardens, when they have reached the guard-room, when they are coming down the straight.

"The favorite wins, the favorite wins—the Bat wins—"

Sproule is sitting down and fishing with whip and spur. The horses sweep by. All is over.

An outsider has won. The Bat a bad fourth.

"A bad job, Mrs. Sproule," says Frank, biting his lip.

"It is indeed," replies the lady with the utmost composure. Her coolness quite won Frank's admiration.

Then Sproule came up heated and muddy, with a rusty great-coat over his faded silk jacket.

"Lord! what a sell! But cheer up, Frank, better luck next time. What do you stand to lose?"

"Over a thousand. And you?"

"Not quite so bad as that. But it's a nipper. Janita, I wish I had your self-possession. You'll have to take in washing though, and we must hire a mangle. I can't afford now to buy one out and out."

Frank burst out laughing.

"That's right. Let's show them we don't care," cried Sproule, also grinning.

He could well afford to laugh. He had managed since the morning to lay off nearly all he had risked upon the Bat, and was only a trifling loser.

CHAPTER XVI.

NORTHWARD HO!

BUT what had become of Dolores? To reply fully to this momentous question, it is necessary to go back to the time when the lovers were anxiously waiting for Sir Hector Harrowby's reply. While Lola was in an agony of suspense her grandfather was suddenly called to Cadiz on business of great importance. He was to be absent only a few days, but he bade Lola an affectionate, unexpectedly affectionate, farewell. Of late he had been so cold to her that she was moved almost to tears when he kissed her and committed her to God's keeping.

"Lolita! why is this thrice-cursed villain to come between us?"

Lola put her hand over his mouth to stop all abuse of her beloved Frank.

"Well does the proverb say, 'Those who breed crows at home may live to have their eyes pecked out.' I have brought you up, child, to bite into my very heart."

"I think you have no heart at all, *abuelo*. None at least that I should care to taste. It is too hard and tough," replied his granddaughter.

"Sorrow then has hardened it. It is all over scars and wounds; and now you would inflict a new one as painful as any that have gone before."

"We might be so happy, *abuelo*. If you only knew my *Paco*. He is so good and generous."

"I have sworn an oath. You shall never wed him. I would sooner see you dead at my feet. But let us not part in anger,

precious child of my heart. *Adios, adios.* May the Holy Mother and all the Saints watch over you now and forever!"

And with this benediction the old man left her.

Don Mariano took no fresh precautions before he went to prevent Lola from meeting Frank Wriottesley. He relied on his granddaughter's promise not to see her lover again—at least, until he gave permission. Nor were there any reasons why he should have misgivings. Although Josefa—still in charge of the house, but entirely distrusted by her master—stood at Lola's side with repeated evil promptings, the girl was too straightforward to go back from her plighted word. Though she knew that her *novio* was waiting outside, waiting only for one sign of encouragement to approach, Lola refused distinctly to see him. No; she had promised; and promises, she said, were not meant to melt like fat in a frying-pan.

In return for her loyalty, Lola, poor child, little anticipated the trick her cunning grandfather was about to play her.

She was seated in the garden at Rosia Cottage; pensive, sad, dreaming only of Frank, and counting the hours until she might meet him again, when suddenly a messenger, heated and dusty, sprang from a mud-stained *haca* (horse) that had traveled clearly a dozen leagues without a halt. He put into her hands a letter from her grandfather; his handwriting, but the characters are feeble, irregular, scarcely legible. She tears open the cover and reads:

"Come to me at once, Lola *mia*. I am sick—a mortal illness has stricken me, and you may never see me more."

Don Mariano's confidential clerk was the next arrival. Yes: the master was ill. He too had heard it. The *señorita* was to go to Cadiz at once, he himself would escort her. The horses were ready saddled; the first stage would be to Tarifa where they find the gondola or diligence coach, and so on by Isla San Fernando to Cadiz. Josefa was desired to pack a box of her young lady's clothes. "It is cold always at Cadiz," says the clerk, "take then, *señorita*, all that you have of the warmest."

Hurry, bustle, running to and fro for a couple of hours, and then the clerk returns in a *calesa* to the door of the cottage.

"*Señorita*, an English steamer leaves in another hour for Cadiz. Heaven, I think, has sent it. The voyage will be but six or eight hours. You will therefore be at your grandfather's bedside before you could have reached Tarifa even by land."

Too much excited to review the situation calmly, knowing only that her grandfather is ill, and may be dead before she sees him, Lola readily threw herself into all these plans. In half an hour more she was at the Old Mole stairs, her boxes in a native boat alongside; the rowers gave way; they passed in among

the fleet of small fruit-laden craft that lay close under the walls of the fortress; they skirted the Devil's Tongue, bristling with heavy guns, and steered out into the Bay, past the black coal hulks, the merchant-shipping and the men-of-war, to where a long low-built steamer with raking masts is puffing smoke from both her funnels as if fuming with impatience to be off.

Up this steamer's side, on board, a Babel of tongues, passengers running to and fro, baggage lying about in large heaps, gangs of grimy coalers passing in and out, and then Lola found herself in a cabin which her grandfather's clerk tells her is all her own. The stewardess is brought and told to take especial charge of the young lady. "Friends will meet her on arrival," said the clerk, *sotto voce*, "and I will speak to the captain. And you, señorita," he went on to Lola, "doubtless you would like to lie down and rest. It is growing late. They will start in half an hour more, and before morning we shall be in Cadiz. For the present then I will leave you."

Lola was indeed not sorry to be left to lie and dream. She needed calm and quiet to still the excitement of her heart. Her poor old grandfather! Now that he was ill, all her affection for him returned purified and strengthened by the fear of losing him altogether. And as she thus reasoned with and talked to herself, her over-fatigued system yielded, and she sank into a tranquil sleep.

When at length she awoke, she seemed to have been aroused by a strange sound, a noise beating in regular cadence, splish splash, thump, thump, thump, and in the first access of alarm she called aloud for help. Then all at once it flashed across her where she was and whither she was going. The stewardess came in, answering her summons, and bringing with her tea and toast, and part of a grilled fowl.

"You have slept well, ma'am?" she asked. "We have been at sea four hours but you never woke."

"What is that noise? It gives me terror," exclaimed Lola, in her broken English.

"The paddles—what makes the steamer go through the water."

"Ah yes, I see. And when shall we reach there? To Cadiz, I mean."

"Which place, ma'am?" asked the stewardess, not catching quite the name disguised by its real pronunciation.

"Cah-h-dis."

"Oh, Kedis,—we're not going to Kedis at all."

"*Dios mio!* what?" cried Lola, springing up from her berth, and lapsing at once into Spanish. "Whither then? Am I not going to see my grandfather who is ill in Cadiz? Tell me,

quick, whither then are we going?" and she repeated the question in English.

"To England, ma'am—Southampton. This is a 'Peono' boat with the heavy mails from Alexandria to Southampton. The 'Ellora,' Captain Allworthy. My gracious! don't take on so; there's a dear."

At first it had not been easy to understand; still less so as the stewardess explained it. All at once a light broke in upon her. It was all a trick, a trick to smuggle her away from her *Paco*, to send her to some far-off shore—England seemed at the other end of the world to her—and her grandfather was to blame for it all.

With a wild cry Lola sank back and sobbed as if her heart would break; while the stewardess in alarm rushed on deck in search of aid, and naturally went at once to the captain.

"A young lady in a fit—well, tell the doctor," said Captain Allworthy.

"Yes, sir; but she's just come on board, sir, and the person who see'd her off said he'd spoke to you—"

"Is she from Gibraltar?"

"Yes, sir—and speaks but little English."

"Ah, I know. Tell the doctor to go to her, and there is a letter for her. It was given to the purser by some person just as we were leaving port. He said the young lady was lying down and that he did not like to disturb her. Let me know what the doctor says."

This letter was the last act in Don Mariano's cunning drama. Every incident had been carefully matured before he left for Cádiz.

His object had been to remove Lola from the immediate influence of this hateful Englishman. To accomplish this, Bellota was prepared to make great sacrifices, to even accept an offer which a short time before he had indignantly spurned. Just about the date of the commencement of this story, certain gentlewomen of high birth, known in England as the Ladies Fairfax, had written to him that they had but recently heard that a female child of their late brother's was alive; and that, feeling affectionately for his memory, they would gladly accept this girl as their own, and begged—if Mr. Bellota was disposed to accede to their request—that she might be sent home to England without delay.

Don Mariano did not take long to consider his reply. The name of Fairfax awoke in him no sentiments but loathing and contempt; nor was this tardy patronizing sort of recognition at all what he deemed he had a right to expect from the family of the man who had wronged his daughter. He wrote therefore

to say that he cursed the memory of George Fairfax, and that he would on no account accept a favor from any of his house.

But now the aspect of affairs was changed. Since he had understood how strong a hold Frank Wriottesley had gained upon Lola, Bellota came to look at the proposal of the Ladies Fairfax in a different light. Amid new scenes, surrounded by new faces, roused and interested by new sensations in that far-off English land which rumor invested with strange magnificence, it was possible that she might be weaned from this ill-advised attachment. She might forget, or failing that, sufficient time might elapse to bring about the removal of the hated Englishman with his regiment from the place.

And thus it was that he came to reconsider his reply to Lady Henriette Fairfax, and to re-open communication with her. He wrote, eating as much humble pie as his proud nature would stomach, saying that circumstances had greatly altered and that he wished now to give his grandchild the benefit of an English social education. He was a poor man, he said, but he was able to do something. Lola should go to them, but not as a burden. She would some day inherit all he possessed—a trifle—but she would be independent then, and he proposed to give her an allowance which would make her equally so now. Her health, too, was by no means good, and he wished to give her the benefit of a complete change as soon as possible. Would their *excelentissimas Señoras* reply if possible by return of mail?

The answer preceded by a week Sir Hector Harrowby's reply to Frank. In that short week Don Mariano carried out his plans.

During the early part of her voyage Lola was hardly conscious. Within a few hours of their departure from the Bay of Gibraltar the good ship was forced to battle in right earnest with the waves. A strong south-westerly gale, beating up against the eastward-flowing current, soon raised a tremendous sea, into which the "Ellora" plunged bravely enough, but greatly to the discomfort of all on board. Physical suffering for a time effaced Lola's mental woes. When she began to recover they told her she had been only four days on board the ship. Four days! not a week since she had left Rosia Cottage; not a month since she had seen her Frank; not a year since her life had been and promised to be always brimful of bliss. Could she in four short days have tasted of such bitter sorrow, endured such awful physical pangs? Surely for her sins the saints had for a time forsaken her, and she had been handed over to tormenting spirits.

That there was some reality in her dream was proved by the strange situation in which she found herself. Cabined, cribbed, confined in a small dark room, a narrow bed, a close and stiling

atmosphere, the objects around all unfamiliar, here a swinging lamp, there a rack with tumblers, next a marble basin, beyond hangings of dingy drab. The voice she heard spoke a language she hardly recognized. It was no dream then! She had been driven forth into the cold heartless world alone.

"There, deary, don't cry!" said the stewardess coming in and proving by her voice and manner that our heroine could soon find friends. "You are ever so much better, ain't you? Strong and hearty, eh, missy? Better, better?"

She kept nodding her head as she spoke, as if there were some language in the motion which Lola could not fail to understand better than English.

"Yes, *gracias al Cielo, y a ti* (thanks to heaven and thee)," said Lola, taking the rough hands of her attendant and kissing them as though they were a relic of her patron saint.

"Poor heart, poor heart, longing to be back at home!"

The kindly sympathy that filled the words brimmed over in the good soul's eyes as she took Lola's head in her lap and gently stroked her soft cheek and lustrous hair.

"It was indeed a cruel shame to send you so far away. I wonder they could spare so bright a beauty. But cheer up now, we shall soon be in."

"In?" English was still so strange to Lola.

"Why, in port. Southampton."

"What is port souzampton? Ah, yes, *llegamos al puerto* (we are arriving at port), I see. You have a good kind far, I think I love you much, and I have no one to love me now—no one but *Paco*, and he is far away."

As Frank's image rose to her mind, she pictured his despair at losing her, and the thought brought tears directly.

"There, there, we have had crying enough. The doctor says you must go on deck. We are in smooth water almost, and the day is beautiful."

A little persuasion only was needed to rouse Lola. After all there was nothing wrong with her beyond the discomforts of seasickness, and these were now fast disappearing. The first whiff of the salt air was like champagne, and at once brought back color to her cheek. This was so new a world which opened before her too. She had never before been on board a ship like this; it was a delight to her to watch the dancing waves, reaching ridge beyond ridge to the distant horizon; to see the ceaseless play of the paddles churning the water into foam, to gaze back at the long wake of the ship, or note the curious twistings of the black smoke traveling in endless gyrations from the funnels into far-off space. The captain gave her his arm and took her for a stately walk up and down the poop, and then when a turn

or two seemed to have tired her, made her comfortable with cushions, and blankets, and soft Indian rugs, in one of the dozen arm-chairs that had been offered to her the moment she seemed anxious to sit down. On all sides she saw only kindly eyes, for all on board knew how ill she had been, and pitied her loneliness. Nothing had transpired of her cruel disappointment, but it was understood that she was a foreigner, speaking little English, and without friends on board. Therefore for the moment the lady passengers forgot their internecine jealousies to welcome her among them, and the men were all her slaves. Among them was one portly gentleman with grayish hair who made the captain take him up and introduce him in due form.

To her delight he spoke Spanish, incorrectly, but with fluency and readiness. Her eyes glistened.

"Ah, senior, it is like rain in August, or Christmas flowers, to hear my native tongue. How well you speak!"—Little flatterer!—"You are from Madrid no doubt; only there can they talk such pure Castilian as yours. No? You are not Spanish? I am indeed surprised."

"I am English, madam, an English officer."

"Yes? Of the garrison of Gibraltar?"

"My regiment is the Halberdiers."

Frank's too! How could she bring the conversation round to the only subject that had interest for her now?

"And do many of your officers speak Spanish as well as your worship?"

"Oh no!" replied Honeybun (for it was our friend the paymaster), with a superb wave of his hand. "Some have a smattering, a few words, *pocas palabras*, no more. There is Frank Wriottesley, now—"

So soon! she had gained her wish almost without effort, and the success of her little ruse brought a quick blush to her cheek, which another woman would have interpreted her own way, but stolid Major Honeybun thought Lola blushed with delight at his urbanity and pleasant talk.

"He is a great traveler is Frank," went on the paymaster. "Always on the move."

"And so now?"

"No, he is at the Rock. There are bright eyes there which are an attraction—so the gossip goes. Dangerous weapons are Spanish eyes," said Honeybun with a clumsy bow.

"Whose eyes then attract this youth?" asked Lola, artlessly. Did the man she was talking to know of their relations?

"He's a precious close spark is Frank. Some beauty he met at a masked ball, so the story goes. Have you seen a carnival ball?"

"But one."

"You are not of the Rock, I apprehend?"

"Yes; I am a 'Scorpion' born and bred."

"Yet I have never seen you! It is strange. Do you reside at Gibraltar always, señorita, or in one of the towns hard by?"

"I live with my grandfather at Rosia. He is Don Mariano Bellota, of whom you may have heard."

"The Viscount!" rose to Honeybun's lips, but he checked himself at once. Perhaps the sobriquet might not be considered a compliment in the bosom of the old man's family.

"I have heard of him often. I wish I was half as rich, señorita."

Lola said nothing. She did not care to talk about her grandfather. Her heart was still sore at his treatment of her.

"How comes it that he lets you travel alone? Can he not spare the time from his affairs to accompany you?"

"I go to friends over yonder in Inglaterra; Ladies Fairfax, of Fairfax Manor, in the county, *condado*, of Glimpshire."

"Bellota's granddaughter a guest of the English Fairfaxes; of the sisters of George Fairfax? Great heavens," thought Honeybun, "how marvelous are the ways of fate!"

"You are a relative of these ladies, I presume?"

"Oh no, none; I have never seen them, nor do I care to, now. But I cannot resist my grandfather's will."

She clearly was quite in ignorance of the past. Should he enlighten her? No, it was no business of his. The secret was George Fairfax's, his former master, and had better be buried with him. Nevertheless, in the day or two which followed, Honeybun had many opportunities of meeting Lola, and soon experienced a strong liking for the pretty, unsophisticated child. He felt bound before they parted to do her an act of justice.

"Señorita," he said, gravely, one afternoon when they were quite alone, "you know my name, Honeybun? Can you remember it? See, here is my card. That is my address, the regiment will always find me."

Lola looked at him a little surprised.

"The time may come when I may be of service to you, perhaps of considerable service—this is no empty form of speech—and you may be glad to know where I am to be found."

Vague and mysterious words which, at the moment, made but little impression upon Lola. It was only a high-flown figure of speech, such as she knew meant nothing in the Castilian tongue. But she took the card, and read the name;

"Major Honeybun, Royal Halberdiers, Battleaxe and Banner Club."

A little later she hid it away with her trinkets in her writing-desk.

But now the voyage was rapidly coming to an end. As the days slipped by Lola soon regained her health and strength; she gained also and as fast the good-will of all her fellow-passengers, and it was with a sinking heart that she felt the hour was approaching when even these new-made friends and she must part. They had all been very good to her. Would the strange ladies to whom Don Mariano had confided her be equally kind? Then with many misgivings she read and re-read her grandfather's last letter. In this he had tried hard to explain away his harshness, and to persuade her that it was for her own good he had sent her away. She was going to visit people of high consideration, whose lineage was as ancient as the Bellotas'; ladies of titular rank, moreover, and rich. Their relationship to Lola's father was the only point on which he studiously remained silent.

"For my own good! Truly it was for my own good that my unnatural grandparent sent me to die, for all he knew, on board this great floating prison. For my own good to tear me from Francisco. Perhaps so; but was it for his good to tell me *mentiras* (lies) as big as Noah's ark? To pretend he was ill, forsooth, and trade on my affection to induce me to enter the trap? Ah, me! And those rich, great ladies—they will be cold, and proud, and prim, and precise, and will frighten me with their unsympathetic ways. I will not stay with them; no, I will go back to my own home. They will not refuse me money, or I will sell my ring, the ring that *Paco* gave me in token of his plighted troth. With them I will not stay, not one hour."

Still closer to port crept the steamer, and every hour Lola grew more anxious and undecided. At one moment she declared that nothing should induce her to face these strangers; sooner would she implore the captain to take her back straight to her own home. Or better still, she would write to Frank as soon as she got to Fairfax, and beg of him to come for her. No, that would be unmaidenly and unseemly. Thus torn and agitated with doubts, Lola passed the weary hours, and still the paddles turned, and the distance grew shorter to shore. People on board began to busy themselves with preparations for disembarking. The fore and after holds were opened, and gave forth their contents; trunks and big boxes were exhumed like ore from some deep mine, and thrown together in heaps to be sorted by those who owned them. The captain was on the bridge with the pilot, and anxious; the male passengers poring over an old edition of Bradshaw, the ladies administering justice among their unruly children, or scolding all the servants within reach.

Lola only sat alone and unemployed. Many came and asked if they could be of service, but sadly she shook her head. Her worldly belongings were but a hair-covered trunk and a Spanish rug, and these were both in her cabin. Her baggage did not want looking after; poor child, it was she herself who needed most attention.

Presently the steamer was made fast alongside the dock; a crowd of custom-house officials invaded the deck, and in half an hour the exodus began. One by one the good friends disappeared; most of them first bidding Lola farewell. All this turmoil, this perpetual shaking of hands, unsettled her. Half sick with apprehension at what might be next in store for her, she took refuge in her own cabin, and for the next hour was quite forgotten. Then suddenly she was discovered by the stewardess.

"Lor' a mussy, miss, you here alone! What a start you guve me. Now whatever is to become of you? I made sure you'd agone with the first of them."

Lola was so wretched she could only repeat in Spanish, "Let me go back home, home. I don't want to leave the ship. Take me back to Gibraltar."

Then voices were heard close at hand.

"I tell you there's no one aboard of that name."

"Then there ought to be. M'lady said there would and there ought."

"We only took in one passenger at the Rock, and she don't answer to that name at all. Her name is Miss Bellota."

"I want none of your Bloaters. Fairfax was the name. I ought to know it. I've been in the service of the family since ever I was born. Fairfax, of Fairfax Manor. Lady Henriette sent me here to meet a young lady of that name. Fairfax, I say! Bloater, indeed!"

"There, there, I go to Fairfax," cried Lola, in an excited way, rushing out of the cabin and joining in the conversation.

"What did I tell you, young man?" said Mrs. Bridle, own maid to Lady Henriette Fairfax. "Didn't I say you knew nothing about it?—you and your bloaters!"

"My name is Bellota," said Lola.

"Then you won't do for me. Fairfax I want, and Fairfax I must have."

"See, here is a letter. My grandfather sent it to Lady Henriette Fairfax."

"That alters the case." But Mrs. Bridle was still somewhat suspicious.

"And here is lady's letter to my *abucló*."

"Ah, I know that. That's right. Right enough, mem, and

I beg your pardon. Only in these days a body can't be too careful, with such vagabonds as there are about"—this was said with a special scowl at the purser's mate whom she had before addressed as young man. "Yes, mem," went on Mrs. Bridle, possessing herself of all that Lola had in her cabin, "and is there any more luggage, mem? And I have a cab, mem. The lady said we was to go to town without delay, as there is apartments prepared at Draggles's—which is the family hotel, mem—where we are to sleep, and go on to the Manor in the morning, express from Euston—a long journey, mem, and we thought you might like to rest a night on the way."

These voluble and varied remarks were like so much Hebrew to Lola. All that she understood was that her guide to Fairfax Manor stood before her, and that she was now to leave the ship for the second stage of her exile.

They soon reached the land and the cab that was in waiting for them wherein they were whirled out of the docks to the station; Mrs. Bridle having expressed a wish to get on to London at once if Miss felt equal to the exertion. Mrs. Bridle's demeanor was a curious study. Latent respect for a relative of the Fairfax family, as she had reason to believe this young lady was, struggled with an ardent desire to patronize and protect a child so evidently without experience of the world. Her incomplete acquaintance with the vernacular which Bridle knew by instinct, placed her rather on the level of a child which has not yet learned to talk, and Bridle would not have been the least surprised if Lola had pulled a coral out of her pocket to suck, or if she had asked to be carried. The childish delight she showed at all around strengthened Bridle's ideas on this head. Who but a mere baby would have asked such questions? A steam-engine is no new revelation even to a *blasé* infant of five; yet here was a full-grown girl clapping her hands with surprise at the first she saw pass. There was no particular crowd at the station; why therefore should Lola ask what all these people were doing?

"Doing?" replied Bridle, "why, booking, to be sure, and seeing to their things"—an entirely lucid explanation for Lola, of course. Only her mysterious connexion with the Fairfaxes saved Lola from receiving a slap, with a caution to behave and refrain from asking ridiculous questions.

But was it strange that Lola should stand there with wonder in her eyes and interjections on her lips? Her previous notions of England had been as wide of the mark as an arrow shot at the moon. There is no special magnificence about Southampton station, but to Lola it was a hall of dazzling light. Brilliant, thronged with strange people, vocal with strange

sounds. Then the hurry and bustle, the perpetual cries and ringing of bells, and last of all the rapid change of scene; for suddenly the carriage door was shut to with a loud slam, and with a noise of clanking chains she was carried away at lightning speed out into the dark night.

It was worth a little anguish to realize such pleasure as this. Already under the potency of new sensations the horrors of her voyage were growing dim. Nestled snugly in the corner of a luxurious carriage, her feet on a pan of hot water, wrapped up in rugs and relieved by Bridle's presence from all personal responsibility, for the first time since she had left Rosia Cottage Lola felt at rest. It was a languorous, sensuous sort of repose, such as a warm bath gives one after a day of severe bodily toil. The motion of the train was not unpleasant, the vibration was positive relief from the creaking timber and shrieking engines of the steamer; the light in the carriage was subdued, and almost insensibly Lola sank into slumber. When she awoke they were taking the tickets, and Bridle said, "This is Wauxhall, we shall get out in a minute, mem. The next is Waterloo." Before she had been thoroughly aroused Lola was transferred to a cab, and still in a half doze, was driven through the now nearly empty streets to the quiet Square near Oxford Circus where Draggles had for years kept a hostelry for the use of a few of the first families of the land.

Did it not savor of the sacrilegious I might take the reader past the smiling landlady—Draggles had long since succumbed—past the smiling waiter, up-stairs to where a smiling chambermaid showed a light in the room prepared expressly for the expected guest. I might tell too how Bridle at first disdainfully gave Lola the benefit of her skillful service as lady's maid, rousing at last to enthusiasm as she handled the child's magnificent hair, and melting altogether when the impulsive girl threw her arms round her attendant's neck, and kissed her twice, once on each cheek, after the manner of her native land.

"For a blessed beautiful angel, Mrs. Draggles," said the lady's maid afterwards in the bar parlor as she partook of a little supper, "give me that young lady as is now couched up stairs. Foreign, no doubt, but better than half the Irishtocracy, or Scotch either. But isn't she kith and kin to the Fairfaxes? Sweet innocent lamb! I love her for her quiet ways. She don't give no trouble—not she."

Nevertheless when Bridle went up-stairs next morning to call her young charge, she found the room empty. Lola had disappeared.

CHAPTER XVII.

LOST IN LONDON.

WHEN Mrs. Bridle ran down-stairs after finding Lola's room empty, she said you might have knocked her down with a feather. Being of stout proportions, no feather of the ordinary kind would well have served for the purpose. The innocent child could never have gone away of her own accord; she must have been stolen. "Who speaks of stealing in my house?" asked Mrs. Draggles, loftily. "The years and years that you and your good ladies have been here, and never so much as a pin's worth missed. No; if she's stole, depend upon it she stole herself."

At this crisis the hall porter removed all doubt by saying he had himself let the strange young lady out about nine that same morning. The young lady was dressed for walking, at least he thought so, though she had not much but a black shawl on her head, and he understood her to say she was going for a walk.

"Why, of course. She'll be in the Square," said Bridle with a sigh of relief.

But Lola was not in the Square; nor in the Square-garden, though they searched through every corner of it. Mrs. Bridle therefore suggested the police, and the hall porter an advertisement in the "*Times*" headed "Left Draggles's Hotel," but the landlady objected strongly. She wanted no "bobbies" about her place bringing it a bad name; nor yet was hers the place that young ladies ran away from. "Better go out and look for her;" and this, with a sinking heart at the hopelessness of the quest, Mrs. Bridle prepared at length to do.

Lost in London! The fate is terrible enough for any inexperienced fellow-countryman, but for a foreigner, knowing but little of the language and absolutely nothing of the customs of the town, truly awful. Bridle pictured to herself her truant charge straying from street to street, in terror and increasing confusion; asking her way perhaps in her broken unintelligible English, but utterly incapable of explaining the whereabouts of the place she sought. This and more the lady's maid imagined, till she grew sick and faint with the immensity of her apprehensions.

Let us return now to our heroine herself.

A good night's rest on shore and in a comfortable bed had quite restored her. It is given thus to the young to shake off sorrow quickly, and regain buoyancy of spirits with the elasticity of growing grass. With the crisp air of a bright winter's morning Lola imbibed fresh courage and took in full draughts

of energy. What if her cross-grained grandfather had packed her off like a bale of old piece goods or tobacco that was to be smuggled across the Sierras? She would show him that she did not care one rush; snapping her fingers at grief and trusting to the blessed saints to bring her to true happiness in the end. And while such thoughts coursed through her mind, a streak of sunlight rushed into the room as if to give her the welcome that would please her best. It was but a sorry ray, pale and sickly, as compared with the glittering sunlight of her southern home; but yet it was sunlight, and the first she had seen for days.

All at once the desire seized her to go out and bask in the sun. Of bells she knew nothing; still less that Mrs. Bridle would be waiting below in readiness to assist at the morning toilet. All these years she had managed to dress herself, and she could do so once again at a pinch. With rather careless haste she arrayed herself now. Throwing a thick black shawl, mantilla-wise, over her head so as to hide her face, and running down the stairs three steps at a time, in another moment she had left the house.

Outside the wind was cold; the ground, crusted with the rime of a white hoar-frost, crackled under her light feet as she walked briskly along, once round the Square and back to the hotel from which she had started.

"Draggles!" what mouth but one trained to such words could manage to speak it aright? Again round the Square, and in mid-course she passes a side street, across which lay another street, and along it crowds of people appeared to be hurrying chiefly in one direction. What did it mean? What was happening? Why did they all walk and drive so fast, and mostly that way? Rather timidly she follows the side street to its junction with the other, and peers round its corner up the busy thoroughfare in utter amazement at the bewildering throng. This is Oxford Street, Lola; does it remind you much of the familiar old Waterport or the grass-grown highways of Ximena, deserted these centuries past? Now curiosity conquers all fear; and she joins the stream and is carried along the crowded pavement.

All around is strangely new and surprising. The vehicles that pass—the large ones laden to the roofs with male passengers, the smaller that seem to have no coachmen till she finds out the hansom drivers perched up in mid-air behind, the colossal vans with horses as big as the elephant she saw at Algeciras Fair—all these astonish her. The shop windows again—resplendent and gorgeous as a dream of Moorish enchantment—whole fronts of broad glass glittering with gold and jewels; tiers of charm-

ing head-dresses; of choice *chassures* worthy to adorn the most perfect *Madridñian* feet; rich hangings of all the colors of the rainbow; robes of varied device; china shops crowded with many-hued crockery, and graceful crystal glass; toy shops, print shops, shops full of fruit and flowers. It was a Fair; but a Fair such as neither Seville, Queen of Andalusia, could rival, nor yet Madrid, *La Corte* where lived the Queen of Spain, so she had heard, and all her grandees. Step by step, almost insensibly, but with increasing pace, Lola walked on, enticed by one glowing sight after another, as the fragrance of fresh flower-beds attracts the bee to wander further and further from the hive.

Now all at once she reaches an open space where many streets converge. Here the din and bustle are multiplied a thousandfold. She pauses a moment, irresolute, for the thought had crossed her mind that she should return to Draggles's. They may be wondering where she is; that kind-hearted attendant who had brought her to London might be anxious, and Lola was loath to give her pain. Besides, even in the quiet streets of Gibraltar it was unusual she knew for maidens to walk abroad alone, and here in this noisy capital it might be wrong—perchance unsafe. As yet no one had seemed to observe her much. But already Lola realized that she was in a peculiar garb; she had not met any one else with cloak on head, all the girls wore hats or bonnets in shape like those of the English ladies on the Rock. Then there crept over her a feeling of uncomfortable strangeness, and she began to wish she were back at the hotel. She had turned, feeling sure that the road to Draggles's was straight and unmistakable, when a sudden confusion in the street arrested her attention.

All at once there was a great gathering together of people. What had happened?

It was only a street accident.

A hay wagon had been coming along, the trusses piled high on top, and reaching out wide on the trestles on either side, so that the horse seemed but a mite beneath his load. Just then it dawned upon him that he was doing too much work, and thereupon he turns and jibs.

Next moment came a crash. The wagon tilted over, with it went the horse, from above came an avalanche of hay trusses, smothering all beneath except two pair of hoofs, kicking out wildly.

The crowd soon thickened. Children were brought in their perambulators; all the policemen, sniffing danger from afar, collected from the neighboring beats; boys out on messages marked immediate considered it of the utmost importance to loiter here for half an hour; ladies even halted to gape as if straw knee-

deep in the street, a horse on his back, and a broken wagon, were sights rare and precious as the transit of Venus, or a costume from Worth's. Yet not all the spectators were mere dummies. A dandy in frock-coat and tall hat—some official person, perhaps on his way to the club or his snug desk in a government office—is first in among the fray, throwing the hay trusses right and left, to give air to the suffering horse; next came a driver from a passing van, who with professional skill went straight to the knots of the ropes which still held in the larger part of the load, and loosening these, relieved the wagon so that to right it was an easy affair. Next the horse was got to his legs. Still quivering in every limb, and breathless, quite beaten and cowed by misfortune, he submitted patiently to be led once more between the shafts, and by and by went his way, a sadder if not a wiser horse.

The fun over, the crowd melted faster than it had first gathered, and Lola again resolved to hurry home. But now came a fresh and far more gorgeous spectacle.

Where others turned to stare, she also bent her eyes, and saw soldiers—red-coated soldiers of the army to which her Frank belonged—approaching with an amount of pomp and magnificence strange even to her, though born and bred amid martial sights and sounds. She was drawn on irresistibly by these gorgeous troops, noting with delight their tall crests, their glittering cuirasses, their clanking steel scabbards, their crimson coats and lustrous boots, and of staring could hardly take her fill. On she walked, on and on, keeping the troopers still in view, and was thus insensibly drawn farther and farther away from home. All at once with a sudden start as if awakening from a dream, she remembered that she had yet to get back to Draggles's Hotel.

Holy Saints! where was she? In a crowded street. All the streets through which she had passed were as full as if men and women were as plentiful here as grains upon the crimson pomegranate. A street, too, of splendid shops; all the streets through which she had passed were full of beautiful shops. A street like all the others, thronged with carriages and horses, all moving in and out of a web so tangled that the wonder was that it was ever unraveled. Which way was she to turn? She looked round for some one to advise and help her, but seemed to see no sympathy on any of the faces around. Then as she stood irresolute, a man and woman respectably dressed came up and accosted her. Her evident confusion, and the broken English in which she replied, led to a short telegraphic signal from one stranger to the other, which Lola, who was watching their faces intently, detected at once. This frightened her as did the curious manner of their address, and without another word she broke

away and moved rapidly down the first street that offered. It reminded her a little of the busy thoroughfare she had at first entered on leaving Draggles's. A very long street this new one (it was Piccadilly), little less attractive than the others, had Lola dared to loiter by the way. But she was now thoroughly anxious to get home. Nothing could tempt her to pause. An hour or two earlier she would have waited like a dozen others to watch the curious performance of dolls and a dog in a high wooden box, or she might have been attracted by the monkey that danced to music.

On, wearily onward, and as it seemed no goal or haven in sight. If she could but sit down for a moment and rest! But where? All the houses were shops; none of them invited her to enter, and there were no seats in sight but the stones. On, hopelessly on, dragging her steps behind slowly and more slowly, from utter weariness and exhaustion. Presently, on one side the houses came to an end, and she saw trees and green grass behind high iron railings. She crossed the street determined to throw herself upon the ground in the shade if no better seat could be found. But under the trees were chairs, and into one she sank exhausted but thankful. She was glad to rest, and would have remained, but soon she again saw the people who had before addressed her making straight towards her. In a fresh access of alarm she rose hurriedly and started off nearly at a run, looking neither to right nor left, till she became confused and bewildered among the trees. She did not dare turn to see if these people still followed, there seemed no safety for her but in continuous flight. On across the grass and under the leafless boughs, although each footstep took her as she thought further and further from the town and its streets in which, somewhere mysteriously hidden, lay the hospitable hostelry of Draggles.

But the green park is not quite a trackless desert, and our terrified traveler soon again reached the busy haunts of men. There was a high wall and railing, beyond, more houses higher than any she had yet seen, and a flight of stone steps down into the roadway.

Lola had now reached Grosvenor Place. With rapid pace she sped on, through Belgrave Square, and into Chesham Place; then as Chesham Street crossed it at right angles, into Lyall Street and along it till she reached the open space of Eaton Square.

But here her strength and her courage broke down together. With a great sob, utterly worn out, she fell upon a door-step within one of the wide portals of this aristocratic region, and for a time became quite unconscious.

She never knew how long she had remained thus, but when

she recovered she found that the interval had sufficed to gather round her a group of friends, sympathizing and unsympathizing. There was the boy with the basket on his back, the street sweeper, the shabby women selling matches, the idle waifs and strays from neighboring streets drifted together as by an unseen current, and over all towered the tall form of a policeman meditatively discussing with himself what he had better do. One by-stander said the girl was "tight," another called it a rum go, a third suggested the hospital, a fourth the police. Then the guardian of order woke up and said they mustn't mass and mob about there, and had better move on. In the midst of it all the hall-door of the house opened, and a majestic butler came out with a pompous air, snorting:

"Pleeceman, pleeceman,"—but could not utter further.

The sacrilege of this audacious girl in taking possession of his master's door-step, deprived him of the power of speech, till a deep voice from within the house sent a shock through him as if it were a galvanic battery, and he quivered all over.

"Yes, Sir 'Ector; yes, Sir 'Ector. I will, Sir 'Ector. Pleeceman, do you know whose house this is?"

The policeman pretended that he did, but probably he did not.

"I thought I told you to send all those people away," said the same voice within. It belonged to a tall, grave gentleman, with fierce eyes flashing out from under great, overhanging white eyebrows. He came to the front with such a stern air of authority, that the crowd began to shake themselves together preparatory to moving on, and the policeman found his tongue.

"Here, get up," he said brusquely to Lola. It was she, who, being the weakest, was of course to blame. "You mustn't come messing about here. This ain't no place for the likes of you. Come, pass away, pass away." He might have been a conjuror and she a wedding-ring, which with his waving hand he motioned to enter a quartern loaf.

Lola did rise in answer to his gesture rather than his words which she hardly comprehended.

"*Dios de mi vida, que desdichada soy!* (Great God, how unfortunate am I!)" she said, sorrowfully, and burst into a flood of tears.

The sound of the strange tongue attracted the attention of the owner of the house. He looked more closely at the vagrant girl, the cause of all this evil.

"There is some mistake here," he said, briefly, to the general public. Then to the butler, "Call Mrs. Binks from the house-keeper's room. Look sharp!" he went on, stamping his foot, and the butler incontinently vanished.

"You need rest, I think, mademoiselle. I fear you have over-

taxed your strength. Will you allow me to offer you the shelter of my roof till we can call a cab or send you to your friends?" and with these words the old gentleman gave Lola his arm with the most stately courtesy, and escorted her into the house.

Entering the dining-room, he handed her over to Mrs. Binks.

"A young lady, Mrs. Binks, evidently a foreigner, who has lost her way in the streets. Try and compose her. I will send in some wine, and when she is quieter come to me and I will endeavor to converse with her in her own or some cognate tongue."

Mrs. Binks was a starched, prim personage, armed with a stiff silk gown and much dignity of manner, as became the house-keeper of a baronet and a bachelor. In her own secret heart she resented this rescue; knight-errantry was not a bit in her line, and she thought her master "had ought to be more circumspect." But whatever she thought she kept to herself. She well knew that Sir Hector's will was law; imperial Cæsar could not have exacted obedience more implicit to his lightest command. Lola therefore must be petted and made much of without stint and without delay.

By and by she went to her master to report progress.

"She is quite herself now, Sir Hector, and would be glad to see you, I think. She got a talking her own outlandish gibberish, and crossing herself—which with the ornament around her neck convinces me that she is one of them misguided Papists, which I don't conceal from you I never did trust, not further than I could see them, if so far."

"Thank you, Mrs. Binks. Your admirable exposition of the beauties of toleration are of inestimable value. But you can postpone them for the present. If the young lady has sufficiently recovered she can go home."

"Perhaps she ain't got no home, Sir Hector," said the house-keeper, sagaciously.

"Why should she not?"

"Such like never have."

"Mrs. Binks, I should part with those gold-rimmed spectacles of yours. They can be no manner of use, or you would know a lady when you saw her."

With that, he rose and walked into the dining-room.

Lola got up to meet him.

Seldom, he thought, had he seen any one more beautiful than this bright-faced girl. Her shining eyes were brimming over with gratitude. There was an indescribable charm in the accents of her gentle voice, as with her pretty broken English she thanked him for his great kindness and condescension.

"I went out to walk, to march in the *sol*, to take the sun, away from the *Fonda*—the hotel, and came far, oh, so far—"

"Which hotel, mademoiselle?" Sir Hector's impulse was to talk French, the language one naturally tries first with every foreigner.

"Drag, drag—"

"Draggles's," suggested Sir Hector.

"*Si, si, eso sí!*" cried Lola with a burst of delight. At length the clouds were lifting. Here was some one who could direct her back to the hotel with the terribly uncouth and unpronounceable name.

"You know it? Oh, send me back, send me back, kind, amiable *señor mio!*"

"You shall go back in my carriage. It is at the door. I know Draggles's."

"Heaven sent me here. *Diez mil gracias*, ten thousand thanks." Lola got up and came across to where Sir Hector was standing and kissed his hand impulsively.

A very gracious and fair young creature indeed.

"No thanks, mademoiselle, I am too glad to be of service. But the carriage waits, and you are anxious, no doubt, to return to your friends. Will they not be much alarmed at your absence?"

"Who, señor?"

"Your friends."

"Alas! I have no friends—none," she said, with a deep sigh.

"So sad, little one! Surely you are not all alone—have you no friends, no relatives in all the world?"

"Out there, yes. In my own land, in Spain."

"You are Spanish then?" asked Sir Hector with increased interest.

Lola nodded, and a short pause followed. Little did either at that moment imagine how close was the connection between them. Another more explicit word, and much pain might have been spared to both. For this chivalrous courtly old gentleman was none other than Frank's uncle, Sir Hector Harrowby.

"And you are strange in this cold land of ours, mademoiselle? Have you been long in London?"

"Last night arrived."

"And you like it?"

"No, but little. Why should I? I am all alone." The tears welled up again.

"There, there, the carriage waits. Do not let me detain you longer. But may I not know your name?"

"Dolores," replied our heroine, looking up at him with her great deep eyes; and then Sir Hector thought that if all Spanish girls were like this one there was no great wonder at his foolish nephew's infatuation.

But it never occurred to Sir Hector that Frank's love and this Dolores were the same person. As for the girl herself Frank's uncle had never been more than a shadowy ogre to her, and she could not be expected to discover him in this grave but kind-hearted old gentleman.

So they parted and many strange things happened before they met again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FAIRFAX MANOR.

MRS. BRIDLE'S misery at her young lady's disappearance, and the utter fruitlessness of all search, culminated about midday in a fit of hysterics. She was of a fidgeting disposition, and she kept repeating that the Ladies Fairfax would say it was all her fault. Then the train by which they were to have traveled left at one in the afternoon, and of course they would miss that; indeed it was impossible to say when they could go down to the Manor. For all Bridle knew she might be sent for by the police to identify the body of Dolores, and she might be kept hanging about in London for a week or more. When she did return to Fairfax—probably alone—it would be merely to pack her box preparatory to leaving the house for good. All this was poured into the ear of the sympathetic Mrs. Draggles, who made matters worse by calling Lola "poor dear," and speaking of her as "it," as if the girl were already a laid-out corpse. So in spite of burned brandy and loosened staylaces, the stout Mrs. Bridle succumbed, and for a good half-hour made Draggles's hideous with her cries.

There is no knowing what fatal consequences were obviated by the opportune arrival of Sir Hector's brougham. But those who ran up-stairs to convey the news to Mrs. Bridle were a little injudicious in their choice of words.

"She's been brought home," they said, thereby giving poor Mrs. Bridle to understand that Lola was utterly incapable of bringing herself; in other words, that she was no longer alive, or, what was perhaps worse, in the custody of the police.

"Brought her!" she shrieked aloud. "How?"

"In a brougham."

"This was better than a police van or a four-wheeled cab.

"Is she alive?"

The question was answered by a merry laugh from Lola herself, who broke into the room at the moment, and began to apologize to Bridle for the annoyance she must have occasioned her.

But Mrs. Bridle was not to be mollified all at once. She burst forth into a torrent of invective, feeling that a little strong language would be a relief to her and could do no harm to Lola, particularly as the latter hardly understood a word of English.

But although "thoughtless," "ill-considerate," "shame-faced," were strange to our heroine's English vocabulary, she guessed from Bridle's purple face that the lady's maid was seriously put out. So she went and patted her first on the hand and then on the cheek, saying:

"*Calla, calla.* Be quiet. Do not get *enfadada*, bad-tempered; but listen to what I tell you now."

And then in broken language, but clearly enough, she made Mrs. Bridle understand how it had all happened. The busy streets, her confusion, her flight, and, last of all, her meeting with a kind señor who had sent her back in his carriage.

"And what—give me leave to ask, Miss—what is to be done now?" said Bridle, still grumbling, just as thunder is still heard rolling off in the distance when the storm is nearly spent. "We've missed the one o'clock train, and there'll not be another to suit till four or five. We shan't be at the Manor at that rate before midnight."

"Wait till to-morrow," suggested Lola.

"Not if I know it!" cried Mrs. Bridle in alarm. No, no, she would be well quit of her giddy charge as soon as she possibly could. Who might conjecture the next move of this most extraordinary young person?

"Telegraph, and say you were too late for the 1.15, and are coming by the next," said Mrs. Draggles with decision.

"Yes, that's what it must be; not but what my ladies cannot abear telegrams. The sight of the boy gives m'Lady Georgina the jumps, and when they get a telegraph no one dares open it. Yes; and they detestate being disturbed late at night, and I was particularly told to get to the Manor before dinner. Still, between two bowls of sour milk the calf must choose the sweetest; and I'd rather face my lady's nagging than risk losing 'her' in the same way again;" and as she spoke she nodded, still wrathful, towards Lola, who was just then looking at herself in the glass with great unconcern.

That evening without further accident, save that their train was much delayed on the road—they traveled down to Huntingdonshire and to Fairfax Manor.

The owners of Fairfax Manor were three old maiden ladies—Ladies Georgina, Marion, and Henriette—the only surviving children of Lord Tremersham, whose second son had been George Fairfax, the father of our Dolores. The eldest son had

died soon after George, and without issue, so that the estates and title had passed to a distant connection. But the Manor, with a moderate fortune, belonged to the three spinsters, and here they had lived in dignified retirement for the last twenty years or more. They had but just settled there, indeed, at the time when George had brought Bellota's daughter to England. This George had been a scapegrace and a constant source of anxiety to his father and elder brother; but his sisters—Marion especially—had always fought his battles with constancy and devotion. Besides, poor youth, he had condoned his offenses by an early and unexpected death. None of his own people were with him in his last moments. Lord Tremersham and the youngest sister hurried up to town, but the funeral was already over, and Dolores had started off to her own home upon the Rock. The relatives were only vaguely aware at the time of the ties which George Fairfax had formed, nor did they care just then to inquire into them too curiously. But all his papers were gathered together by Lady Henriette, and it was from these some years later that they ascertained how strong had been the affection their brother bore to the girl with whom he had run away. Although it was impossible to find out whether there had been any marriage, the good ladies were irresistibly drawn to make inquiries at Gibraltar whether Dolores was still alive. Through an agent they heard of Bellota, and of his grandchild, who bore her mother's name.

Of the three sisters who were joint owners of Fairfax, Georgina, the eldest, was now of an advanced age; at times a great invalid, generally querulous, although never exactly out of temper. She was rather deaf, and nearly blind, so that her little lapses might indeed be forgiven her. Lady Marion, who came next, was close on sixty. She had been in her day a celebrated beauty; her portrait filled all the annuals and keepsakes for years and years, and she might have married a dozen times over. Perhaps she had been bewildered by the crowd of her suitors, and could not make up her mind which to choose among so many; perhaps, like other handsome girls, in all ages, and in all classes of life, she waited and waited, but the right man never appeared; perhaps—and of this there was still a rumor current among those whose memories went back to the days when Lady Marion Fairfax was a reigning toast with the beaux—she had given her affections to some one who had not cared to accept her love. But I cannot pause here to detail how she, with her sisters, had grown gradually from their bright beautiful youth to mature womanhood, from that to the sere and yellow leaf, unmarried still. Each had had her own life's romance. Is there any life which has reached half a century

without knowing some great episode, by which it has been shaken through all its fibres? That aspect, now rugged and unlovely, was once, though for a moment, made beautiful by love; just as in nature, a scene the most commonplace and bald is exalted by some fleeting effect of sunlight in a picture full of sentiment and grace.

The third sister, Henriette, was still comparatively young, that is to say, she was stout and rosy, and not much more than fifty years of age. Her foible was management, and she had been during the last years of his life her father's right hand. In the house she was nearly supreme; in the village she ruled all the old women and school-children like a despot; she read Hodge lectures on intemperance, and preached to the rector himself on any text that at the moment was uppermost in her mind. But like most seemingly irresponsible monarchs, there was one spirit which Lady Henriette found superior to her own. She was afraid of Lady Marion, whose tongue could upon occasions be both fanged and incisive. With all her masterful ways, Lady Henriette was somewhat weak; and this her sister Marion had long ago discovered. When therefore Henriette went too far, Marion stepped in and applied a salutary check. These two sisters were really deeply attached to each other and to Georgina, who was, however, nearly a cipher. But occasionally all three fell out, and then there was a general "tiff," which had the effect of making them all miserable for a time. Something of this kind occurred on the afternoon when Lola was expected to arrive at Fairfax Manor.

A place had been laid at the dinner-table for her, and the meal itself put back an hour to allow of her appearance. This was no slight concession, for they were perforce early people, just as their meals were simple and unpretentious. It would have killed two out of three of the old ladies right off to have dined for three consecutive nights at eight or nine; while at their advanced age turtle soup and made dishes ranked as the most active poisons. But when they sat down at six to their plain fare it was in state. They were all in full evening toilet, dressed with the scrupulous care of ladies of the old school, just as they had dressed year after year since the days when they had been presented at Court and taken rank as marriageable maidens in their father's house. Behind Lady Georgina's chair stood little Mr. Houps, a wizened old man who had been in the service of the Fairfax family for nearly sixty years. He called Lady Georgina and Lady Marion "young ladies" still, while Henriette could never be more than a child in his eyes. But nothing could exceed the reverence with which he treated them.

And now when they had assembled in the drawing-room just

before dinner, it was with the lowest bow and most deprecating air that he brought in Mrs. Bridle's telegram on a salver, and waited in the hopes it might be opened and read before he left the room.

Knowing Lady Georgina's childish dread of telegraphic messages, Henriette tried to smuggle this, unread, into her pocket. But the bright yellow cover betrayed itself.

"I insist upon hearing the worst at once," cried Georgina, half whimpering already. London might have fallen into the hands of the Turks, or the Queen might have abdicated in favor of Odger.

"Don't be silly, Georgina," said Lady Marion, crossly. "Make haste, Henriette. I suppose it's only from the green-grocer."

"My duty to your ladyships. Missed the 1.15 train, coming on by the next."

This was what Mrs. Bridle said, and her message was received with unmistakable annoyance by the whole party, including Houps.

"That girl!" cried Lady Henriette, who, as speaking of her own maid whom she had taken from the village and trained to her service from childhood, was at liberty to use plain language, "that girl! she is no more to be depended upon now than she was as a child."

"You have spoiled her," remarked Lady Marion, shortly.

"Indeed I have not—"

"Oh, as you please. If you mean to contradict me, I shall talk no more." Lady Marion smoothed her dress out, then put her hands together on her lap and looked straight before her.

"There has been some accident," said Lady Georgina, who had now got Bridle's telegram in her hand and was looking at it as if it had been written in invisible ink, and she expected every moment to see new characters with more details spring forth upon the pink paper, "some accident, and Bridle does not like to tell us the truth. Or she has got into the wrong train."

Railways were Lady Georgina's *bête noir*. She was quite appalled when she heard of accidents and collisions, as when still strong enough to travel, she had been utterly confounded by the intricacy and bustle of a London terminus.

"Depend upon it," she went on, shaking her head solemnly, "depend upon it, Henriette, you mis-directed her, and she has gone down into Devonshire."

"And across to the Channel Islands, and so on *via* France to Mesopotamia;" added Lady Marion, without looking to right or left.

"Really, Georgina," replied Henriette in her own defense,

"you might, I think, allow me some credit for arranging matters. Now, tell me, have you ever known me in the wrong?"

"I have, often," said Lady Marion, sharply, bringing one hand down on the other to emphasize the "often."

"Well, we shall know the truth when they arrive," observed Lady Henriette, biting her lip. She smarted under her sister's words, but dare not resent them.

"If they ever do arrive," Lady Georgina remarked, lugubriously, adhering still to her own view of the case.

"We'll have Henriette committed for manslaughter if they do not," said Lady Marion. "She has clearly been greatly to blame."

"I'm sure I took every precaution. I explained to Bridle most carefully all she had to do. But Bridle—"

"Is more or less a fool. Chiefly more. And you have made her just what she is. She has been spoiled by your absurd pampering till she has lost all self-reliance and independence of character. Therefore the first time she is thrown upon her own resources, she fails—miserably. I trust you will not pursue the same course with this child who is now coming to us, and of whom as yet we know next to nothing."

"I trust I shall do my duty by her" said Lady Henriette, with sudden seriousness of voice and manner.

"You will try, I dare say. But it is a great responsibility and a great risk."

"Surely, Marion," interposed the elder sister, "you do not regret the step that we have taken? You know you yourself proposed it."

"I did nothing of the kind; it was Henriette."

"I declare I did not. Georgina spoke to me first."

"How can you say so? You know it was Marion."

"Well, I have no objection to take the blame of it, provided Henriette promises not to be injudicious with the girl."

"I shall not remain idle and inactive if she really wants my care. Remember she is a foreigner, ill-educated, underbred, and a Papist."

"What then? are you going to open a girls' school, or start a mission for the conversion of benighted Spanish Catholics to our own united and harmonious Church? I tell you, Henriette, plainly, at once, that I will not be a party to any proselytizing. This girl's faith is that in which she has been brought up, and we should be taking a very unfair advantage of her if we sought to shake her views."

"Surely I may teach her to speak good English, and to have the manners and accent of an English lady?"

"How dare you suppose she is without them?"

"Is it possible she can have them with her antecedents?"

"I thought we had agreed that her antecedents were never to be mentioned, even among ourselves?"

"Well, yes." Lady Henriette was obliged to admit it.

There had been much serious discussion between Marion and Henriette chiefly—for Lady Georgina did not take a very active part in anything—as to how Lola was to be received, whether as niece, distant relative, or merely as a young friend; and it had been settled that it would be wisest to look on her in the condition last named. It could serve no purpose they thought to bring her publicly forward as their brother's illegitimate daughter.

"Yes," repeated Henriette, "I was wrong to use the word antecedents, but I will not surrender my duty. It will be my duty to do what I can for this unformed ill-taught child; her father's family owes her something—and if I must work alone, why, I must, that is all."

"You may be quite sure that if you desire to worry and vex the girl with your silly theories on education, you will get no help from me. On the contrary, I shall take her part and try to protect her. That is my view of the duty I owe her."

"Really, I begin to wish she were not coming," said Lady Georgina with a querulous whine.

"Perhaps, as you predicted just now, she never will arrive, and thus Henriette will be spared much mental anxiety."

But now Mr. Houps came forward, and pompously announced that their ladyship's dinner was served, and there was a truce of some hours' duration.

The ladies dined early principally on Georgina's account, because she was ordered to retire to rest by ten o'clock at latest.

As usual Houps appeared about half-past nine, set out a little table with glasses and bedroom candlesticks, and disappeared. But Lady Georgina made no move.

"You know what time it is?" observed Henriette.

"I do."

"Hadn't you better—"

"Go to bed? Certainly not. I shall sit up till they arrive."

"But sitting up late is always so bad for you."

"Henriette, I shall sit up to-night, even if it were to be my last. I ought to welcome my brother's daughter to this house, and I shall not forget my duty. You have talked a good deal of yours—both of you; you must not forget that I have also mine."

"As you please, Georgina. But do not, I beg of you, call Dolores our brother's daughter."

"And why not? Is she not our niece?"

"Yes; but if you remember we agreed—"

"I remember nothing of the kind; nor shall I be tempted by you, Henriette, into overlooking the sacred importance of truth. I am indeed surprised at you, child."

"Dear, dear," cried Henriette looking appealingly to Lady Marion, as much as to say, "What are we to do with her?"

"If Georgina likes to trifle with her health it is her own affair," replied Lady Marion. Then to her eldest sister, "You know, Georgina, how ill it made you last time that you sat up as late as eleven."

"I know that I am trying to do what is right, and in that endeavor I shall allow neither of you to interfere."

"By all means, do what you please, Georgina. Your obstinacy, I know, is quite beyond cure."

"Sister Marion, I shall not allow you to address such language to me. You forget what is due to your eldest sister."

"Pray, pray do not quarrel," Lady Henriette implored.

"I have no wish to quarrel," said Lady Georgina stiffly. "But I cannot submit tamely to misrepresentation, nor can I permit you, Henriette, to accuse me of telling untruths."

"I?" cried Lady Henriette, utterly aghast at this unexpected change of ground. This shift in attack was indeed based upon perversion of statement. "I never said anything of the kind."

Lady Georgina waved her hand as if she disdained to argue the point, and Lady Marion with her usual wicked love of fun said:

"I am indeed surprised at you, Henriette. But you were notorious as a child for wilful inaccuracy."

"I will not be called untruthful," went on Lady Georgina, still obtuse. She had begun now a slight whimper, and was quite convinced that her grievance was against Henriette. "I will not be called untruthful, nor shall I be ordered off to bed by you, as if I were the child and you the mistress of the house."

Lady Marion smiled.

"Your treatment of your elder sister, Henriette, is most reprehensible. I must say I pity our young visitor if she is to be subjected to your overbearing ways."

Henriette looked from one to the other in deprecation; but Lady Georgina sat bolt upright with her nose in the air, and Lady Marion, equally rigid, merely gave utterance to a curious sound like "Himpff" which, spoken with a slightly nasal twang and firmly closed lips, indicated always that she might say a great deal but forebore.

And so they remained, seated each in her favorite corner, waiting while the time slipped by on leaden wings. After the last skirmish, conversation languished. Lady Georgina was too much exhausted to talk; Lady Marion was in a monosyllabic

temper, replying only by the most nipping "noes" or an entirely unsympathetic "yes" to Lady Henriette's well meant sallies. Ere long the two elder sisters had sunk into slumber, while Henriette herself found it difficult to keep her attention fixed upon her work.

Ten o'clock came. Eleven.

The train was late, very late. What if there had really been an accident such as Lady Georgina feared?

Half-past eleven. The house was quite still, save for the mysterious noises of the night which the watcher exaggerates or invents.

Wheels on the drive? Not yet. Was that the lodge gate that clicked? Again a false alarm. Midnight struck, and the sleepers turned uneasily in their chairs.

"Dear, dear," thought Lady Henriette, "how ill they will be after this—both of them. I had better wake Georgina. She ought really to go to bed."

But as she rose from her chair the front door-bell pealed loudly through the house, and Lady Henriette knew that the belated travelers had arrived.

"O m'lady," said Mrs. Bridle, speaking first, "it's a mercy we're alive. The train—"

"I knew it," said Lady Georgina waking at the word. "There was an accident to the train."

"Stuff and nonsense," interposed Lady Marion, "and we are forgetting our guest."

Lola was standing shyly just where she had entered. Wearied with her long journey following the morning's excitement; sick at heart in her utter strangeness at this new scene; lonely, friendless, unhappy, for the moment our heroine looked the picture of grief. With her pale cheek and downcast eyes, she might have been some novice just cut off from all home ties.

But in another moment everything had changed. She was the centre of interest; soft words and kind looks surrounded her.

"You poor dear child," cried first Lady Henriette, "you must be exhausted, quite. Let me take off your cloak."

"We are glad to welcome beneath our roof" began Lady Georgina determined to make her point without delay, "our brother's—"

"You look so tired I think you would like to go to bed at once?" asked Lady Marion, interposing just at the right moment.

"Marion do not interrupt me. I repeat we are glad to welcome beneath our roof—" but her ladyship was not permitted to finish her sentence that night. Even while she was speaking,

Lady Henriette had taken Lola under her wing and spirited her away to the room which was to be her own up-stairs—a room so beautiful and cozy, that in spite of her fatigue, Lola could not rest till she had admired it and all its pretty fittings again, and again.

Like the rest of the house this bedroom had rather a low ceiling, crossed with one wide rafter stained chocolate color to match the wood-work of the window, cupboards and door. The mantel-piece was of carved wood much the same color; all the furniture was of old walnut, which from age had become a rich warm brown. The carpet was a bright crimson, but on it were several bright-colored Moorish rugs: for window curtains, Algerian cotton in stripes, narrow bars of purple, green and yellow; on the walls a sober greenish-gray paper, the pattern of closely interwoven dull green leaves and branches bearing among them innumerable apples of gold and russet red. Against all these dark masses stood out in bright relief large quantities of light blue color. Upon the bed a coverlet of pale blue silk; a blue velvet border to the mirror above the mantel-shelf; a hanging *portière* to the fire-place also of blue velvet, embroidered with sprays of jasmine and convolvuluses; on the shelf and on brackets several vases and plates of blue; the toilet-ware the same; at the window, the toilet-table draped in delicate muslin over blue and bound with big blue bows; an arrangement of muslin around the looking-glass and more blue ribbon—blue prominently all over the room.

A bower this, a beautiful bower, thought Lola at first; and then followed a misgiving that it was nothing better than a gilded cage, against which she was doomed to beat her wings in despair.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOSTILITIES.

LOLA slept late next morning. When she woke, Mrs. Bridle, who brought her a cup of real Spanish chocolate, said it was past eleven.

"*Dios! que soy holgasana!* How lazy I am!" cried Lola. "And the señoras, are they already up?"

"Up! these hours Prayers is read in the housekeeper's room, every morning at eight, and m'ladies breakfast at nine, which they did to-day, leastways Lady Henriette did. Lady Marion's not well, and m'Lady Georgina's kept her bed. Not that I wonder; for her, ailing and aching as she always is, to sit up last

night till we come home, it was little less than a madman's act, and now she can't be surprised she's ill. She'll keep her room now for a week or more."

"Gorgeena!" asked Lola; "which lady was she?"

"The oldest. She's the eldest of the family—older than Lord Bancroft, him as was heir, but died before the Earl. Lady Georgina is as old as the hills, I think."

"And that pretty old lady with the white hair?"

"Lady Marion—she is a pretty old lady, and a pretty old temper she's got. Why, sometimes, when she talks at you, it seems as if you can't abear yourself, and she makes them cry—her sisters, I mean—both of them, when she's out of sorts. Then there's Lady Henriette, my own lady; she keeps all straight in this house, except when my Lady Marion straightens her too."

"Lady Henriette! She is the *gorda*, the stout lady who was so kind to me last night?"

"She *is* kind when you please her. But, bless you, she do worry too at times."

"And what is to do to please her?"

"You must agree with all she ses, and let her manage all; and then, if you sit quite still, and talk quite pretty, and learn what she tells you, and work out the patterns she sets you, you'll get on well enough. She'll teach you things. I heard her say as how you'd want teaching; and trust her to give them learning as wants it or don't want it either, which I didn't, although I got it more than enough."

"And if, perchance, I do not do all this, what then?"

"Why then she will scold and be cross."

"And beat me perhaps, as Barsé at Agua Dulce did his donkey. I have come to school then; it is to this my good grandfather has brought me by his tyrannizing and heartless ways."

There was already rising in her heart a spirit of rebellion. She saw through it all. It was thus that her grandfather hoped to cure her of her love for Frank Wriottesley, by exiling her, shipping her off slyly against her will to this cold Northern land, where no doubt she was again to undergo all the torments and privations of the old days at the Europa Convent School.

Was this to be endured? No; a thousand times no. She would not allow herself to be hectored and tutored and brow-beaten by these strange ladies. She would not purchase kindness of them by subserviency and tame performance of all the tasks they set her.

So it was that, even before she well knew all their faces, she had braced herself up to resistance, and was half resolved to be as wayward and as difficult to manage as one of the unbroken colts on the pastures of Agua Dulce.

As soon as her toilet was completed, Bridle led her down to the little morning-room, which was Lady Henriette's special *sanctum*. It had a side-door into the shrubbery and garden, and by this entered the farm-servants and others coming for orders, or for wages at the end of the week. A dark little room this, for the boughs of the trees reached close to the one window, and it had a generally cheerless and official look, the effect of which was heightened by the business-like writing-desk and high arm-chair occupying all the centre space.

Lady Henriette was docketing and tying up papers with red tape when Lola entered. An air of importance sat upon her comely, florid face, which was framed in by a moulding of stiff, cork-screw curls, such as were the fashion in Lady Henriette's youth. But she got up and kissed her young guest quite affectionately, and made her sit near the fire.

"You are quite rested then?"

"Oh yes, *muchas gracias* (many thanks)."

"We are early people here," went on Lady Henriette; "we cannot have you quite so late again. But this, the first day, of course, it does not matter."

Lola did not at once understand these words, but she was sensible from the tone in which they were spoken that they were intended to convey some sort of reproof. So she looked at Lady Henriette a little defiantly, and merely bowed a stiff acknowledgment.

"And now," went on Lady Henriette, "let us talk a little about yourself, and what we are to do with you while you stay with us."

It was delightful to have the girl thus all alone this first morning, without fear of interruption or interference from Lady Marion.

"You will be lonely here. We have no companions for you of your own age, and we are three very quiet old ladies, who lead a very humdrum, uneventful life. You will grow weary of having so much spare time on your hands. I think we must make you learn something new."

Lola knew what "must" meant, and resented the idea of compulsion which it implied.

"You have been to school?"

"Sí, señora—years ago." She pouted as if she were as old as Methusaleh, and her school-days lost in remote antiquity.

"And you can play?"

"*Jugar*: play games?"

"No, child—music—some instrument, I mean."

"Oh, sí, the *patillos* and the *sambomba*."

"Gracious goodness! what are they?"

"Do you not know the *palillos*, the castanets, señora? I will get them and play for you, and you shall dance to them as we do at the time of fair."

The notion of making this stout lady perform a *sandango* was so irresistibly comical, that it was with difficulty Lola resisted an impulse to laugh outright.

"I dance! My dear child you must not make such preposterous proposals."

Henriette was not exactly ruffled but she was becoming piqued. This young person, so meek and gentle, had a spirit evidently, and could use weapons of ridicule, if needs were, in her own defense.

But the cross-examination continued:

"Then you have never learned the piano?"

Lola shook her head.

"You can speak French of course?"

Another negative in the same expressive language.

"Nor Italian? No? Have you read history? No? Nor geography, nor the natural sciences?"

Lola, as each question was put, shook her head with increasing force of gesticulation.

"Then what on earth do you know, child? What can you do?"

"What can I do? I can use the fan, *mira*—look!—and make it talk; and I can cook a *guisado*, a Spanish stew, with *pimientos verdes* and *azafran*. I can make pomegranate preserves, and I can wash *ropa*, clothes, as white as the whitest clouds; and I can dance the *habanera*, the *ollé*, the *bolero*, and the *sandango* like this"—and with that she jumped from her seat and pirouetted round the room, waving her arms in graceful circles, and pointing her toes as she executed the strange and slow movements of the wild half-oriental measure.

"And I can sing. Listen!" And then the merry girl broke forth into a monotonous chant, giving it the true nasal twang, a long-winded "romance," such as the muleteers cheer themselves with, league after league of their interminable road.

"Stop, stop! for mercy's sake, stop!" cried Lady Henriette.

The "romance" or ballad of Spain might be interesting to philologists, but it was hardly melodious to ears trained to classical music. Nor was this uncouth barbaric dance calculated to please her ladyship. She called it a terrible exhibition, and was now so completely shocked that she could hardly bring herself to continue the conversation.

But presently Lola, satisfied with the impression she had made, threw herself back into an arm-chair and clapped her hands with delight.

Lady Henriette was truly aghast. What was to be done with this very vivacious and extraordinary young person? It was quite lamentable to see the state she was in. A savage—a wild, untutored savage—could hardly be more ignorant of the proprieties of life. Her education must have been entirely neglected. Lady Henriette and her sisters had been brought up by one of the strictest governesses of the day, whose most earnest task was to teach them to say prettily “potatoes, prunes, and prism,” and all such magic syllables as have the effect of leaving the lips properly and primly pursed up after their utterance.

There was now a long pause. Lola in the corner was watching the other from behind the fan, which she was using very vigorously after this impromptu exhibition of her powers. Her great lustrous eyes sparkled with fun and malice combined, for she saw that for the present Lady Henriette was confounded.

But her ladyship soon recovered. She was not to be easily defied by any of the inmates of Fairfax Manor, and although Lola was a visitor and a guest, she could not be permitted to retain the advantage. It would have been neither seemly nor consistent with Lady Henriette’s ideas of her own importance.

“I much fear,” she said at length, “that you have been allowed to run quite wild at Gibraltar. Was there no one out there to give you instruction, to watch over you? Did you live alone, quite alone, with your grandfather?”

To all these queries Lola replied only a short *sí*. She hardly understood them, but it was easy to say yes.

“He was very much to blame, I think.”

“To blame?” asked Lola.

“Yes; I should perhaps say injudicious.” The ground was not exactly safe, and Lady Henriette thought it better to qualify a little her criticism of Mr. Bellota. “He should have taken more care of you. He has been to some extent ill-advised, not to say neglectful.”

But here her words formulated a distinct charge against Don Mariano, and our heroine bristled up at once. However much she might herself upbraid her grandfather, he was yet her nearest relation, who had loved her till now with an exceeding love, and she could not suffer these strangers to abuse him.

“No, señora, it is you who are wrong. *Mi abuelo* did all for me that was in him to do. I too was happy always, and had always all that I desired.”

“Too much I think. You had your own way, which is never good for any one, least of all for young girls.”

“How?” asked Lola, seeking further enlightenment. She was in arms fighting for her grandfather, and asked only for plain-speaking language.

But Lady Henriette was too wary, and passed on to something else.

"And now, tell me—what are we to call you? Your name is—"

"Maria!"

"Maria! I thought it was Dolores."

"Yes, that too—Maria de los Dolores."

"No more?"

"Yes; Encarnacion—Maria de los Dolores Encarnacion Aurelia Pilar Carmen—" She was inventing, of course.

"Gracious, goodness me! What a string of names! It must have taken a week to baptize you."

"Rafaela Tunantilla Sabidilla Manuelita Josefiya Ines—"

"That will do—that will do!"

"Papparucha Enfalucha—"

Lady Henriette held up her hands in dismay.

"Antonia Ramona Leonor Caracoles Bellota y Peñafior."

"And by which of these names are we to call you?"

"By all."

"Impossible!"

"It will be (*mala costumbre*) bad manners, if you do not."

"I could not remember half," said Lady Henriette, quite seriously.

"Oye, listen! I will say them over again."

"No, no," cried Lady Henriette, putting her hands to her ears. But Lola had burst forth into "Maria de los Dolores Encarnacion Amelia Pilar Carmen Antonia Ramona Leonor, et cetera, et cetera," she said at last, lapsing into a loud laugh.

Clearly a difficult undertaking to break our heroine to harness.

"But Dolores is bad enough—it is so foreign, so peculiar."

"It is my name," said Lola, doggedly. "I cannot take it off as you would your *peluca*—your w-e-e-g!"

At which remark Lady Henriette's hand went suddenly up to the beautiful brown front with its companion curls, the secret of which she fondly hoped no one had penetrated, but which had been patent to Lola the moment she entered the room.

"Well, I hope Dolores will be enough." Her ladyship wished to give the conversation a turn. "What does *Dolores* mean?"

"Pains, aches—what you call toothaches, headaches, leg-aches—"

"Ah!" with a little scream; "you must not talk of them."

"Of aches—no?"

"No; of legs."

"Y *porque*! why then?"

"It is not ladylike. There are no such things."

"*Hola!* what more was wanted? No legs! How then in England do you walk? By chance with your hands, or on your heads. Ah, yes! *La bel idea!* Capital! In England you walk upon your heads."

"Don't be ridiculous, Dolores."

"Or with wings. You are like angels, serafines, canaries, and you fly. Señora, I should like to see *you* fly," added Lola, impudently. And the shot told.

"Are we to call you Dolores?" she asked, still harking back.

"If you choose. Those who like me and whom I like call me Lola. *Paco* calls me Lola, or Lolita, little Lola."

"And who is *Paco*?"

"*Paco* is short for Francisco."

"And Francisco is—"

"My lover!" she said, quite unconcernedly. Then lapsing into her native tongue, she cried, "*ay Paco, Paquito de mi alma cuanto te amo!* (My soul's *Paco*, how much do I love thee!)"

"I did not know, Dolores, that you were engaged."

"How do you mean? Engaged, busy, occupied, *ocupada*?"

"No; promised—engaged to be married."

"Ah, I understand. No, alas! I am not yet engaged. I have a *novia*, a sweetheart, but my grandfather is an old Jew Turk, a Barbary Moor, and he forbids it. But I love my *Paco*. I love the ground where he walks, the air that he breathes, the water he swims in, the house that holds him, the fire that warms him, the horse that carries him; his hat, his boots, his spurs, his cigarettes; ay! even his *mala sombra* old uncle, whose anger we fear, and which together with my grandfather's cruelty keeps us apart."

Dolores spoke from the fullness of her heart; without hesitation or faltering.

"That will do for the present about this *Paco*," cried Lady Henriette, very coldly, as soon as she recovered from her surprise. But she had had time to think while Lola was still speaking, and she had determined that the subject of this ineligible young man should be tabooed peremptorily and forever.

"Dolores," she said, very gravely, "what your grandfather disapproves cannot for one moment be tolerated here. This *Paco*, as you call him, must never be mentioned again."

"Not mentioned!" she inquired. "I do not quite understand."

"I mean, that you must never talk of *Paco* again. You must forget him."

"Not talk of *Paco*! Forget my *Paco*! *En mi vida*, never, never in all my life, though I live to be as old and as cross, *y tan fea*" (and as ugly, but she used the Spanish words) "as you yourself."

Lady Henriette could not submit to be defied by a young girl who had only been a few hours in the house. Injured dignity drove her to forget that Lola was not her creature, but her guest. There was much sternness in her voice and manner when she said:

"Dolores, you must do as you are told. In this house young people are expected to succumb to their elders, and it is for your good that you should learn early in life to control your temper and surrender your own headstrong will to the wisdom of others. Your grandfather has intrusted you to us, and we must do our duty by you. We should fail in that entirely if we allowed you to persist in conduct utterly indecorous and wrong for one of your age."

Lady Henriette was pretty well satisfied with this harangue, and looked for it to produce an immediate effect. When she lectured the curates or rated Mrs. Bridle, they struck their flags and surrendered at the second sentence. But Lola carried stouter metal. Besides, she was as good as armor-plated against such preaching by her imperfect acquaintance with the English tongue. Nevertheless, with peculiar instinct, such as we may notice in our dumb pets, she thoroughly realized that stern proof was intended. But just as a high-tempered horse is often less easily controlled by unkindness than by caresses, so our heroine grew restive under her ladyship's black looks, and became more and more resolved to resist this new tyrant with all her might.

Her cheek was pale, but it was with flashing eyes that she said:

"Señora, keep your cross words for those whom they can touch; they do not me. I care not for you—not one fig!" and she snapped her fingers almost in Lady Henriette's face.

"My goodness me!" cried the other, utterly staggered by this mutinous outburst. Was this girl to win the day? Impossible! Lola must be subjugated; and this resolve, followed out to its logical end, meant nothing less than forcible coercion, should other arguments fail. She had not tact enough to perceive that Lola might be coaxed but never driven into submission. And now came the *ultimatum*.

"Will you promise me, Dolores, never to mention this *Paco* again? Never on any account to hold communication with him while you are here? Do you understand me?" And she repeated the words slowly, seeing from the girl's bewildered face that the substance of this demand was not immediately intelligible. "Will you promise?"

"No, señora, *jamds*, never."

And Lola added a few words of Spanish to the effect that no

power would induce her to resign her word, neither in this world nor in that to come; at which words she crossed herself in due form and with great solemnity, so as to give her words all the sacred importance of an oath,

There was no help for it then. Lady Henriette must take strong measures.

"It is most painful to hear you speak like this, Dolores. It is a shock, a terrible shock. But I cannot shrink from my duty; I should never forgive myself if I allowed you to have your own way. I must ask you to go up-stairs to your own room, where perhaps, in privacy and at your leisure, you may reflect upon your fatal perversity of temper. I will myself show you the way up-stairs. Come!"

Lady Henriette, having heard from Bridle of Lola's escape from Draggles's, had some suspicion of her even now when safe within four walls; therefore she thought it prudent to accompany our heroine in person, and went the length of examining the window-fastenings. More; on leaving Lola to herself she removed the key to the outside of the door and turned it in the lock.

It was thus that recalcitrant spirits had been tamed when Lady Henriette was a child, and the well-intentioned but misguided lady thought the same treatment would be efficacious now. Having thus vindicated her authority, she returned to the morning-room in anything but a comfortable frame of mind. She could not wholly absolve herself from harshness; yet surely the girl must be conquered? By continuously harping on this one string, and outrageously exaggerating the opposition offered, Lady Henriette very nearly convinced herself that Lola had been terribly to blame, so much so, that the punishment which had overtaken her was even less than she deserved.

Nevertheless, when the lunch-bell rang, Lady Henriette gathered herself together and went like a cur that expects to be well whipped to meet her sister Marion at table. She dreaded Marion's reproaches; and with a sinking heart, when asked for Dolores, she replied:

"She is in her room."

"How late! Is she unwell? Have you been to her?"

"I have seen her. She came down-stairs, but—"

"Do not beat about the bush, I beg. I hate conundrums."

"The fact is, I have been compelled to make her keep her room."

"Really, I am truly grieved. Have you sent a groom for Dr. Dillbringer?"

"It's not that she's exactly ill—"

"But you were right to take every precaution," said Lady Ma-

tion, still at cross purposes. "It would be a serious responsibility if she were ill upon our hands. After all, she is only a loan. I confess I was much taken with her. It is one of the most prepossessing young faces I have ever seen." Each sentence was like a knife thrust into Lady Henriette. "Have you sent up her lunch? No? I will take it myself."

Now it had formed part of Lady Henriette's scheme that the malcontent should remain without food as long as she continued obstinate. But to tell Lady Marion this would be to precipitate a confession of the whole story. Not that confession could be long delayed, but, like all cowards, Lady Henriette was glad to get even a moment's respite.

Followed by the obsequious Houps, Lady Marion went slowly up-stairs. To her surprise she found the door locked from the outside. Turning the key and entering, her surprise grew to open-mouthed indignation at seeing Lola stretched out upon the bed, the very picture of woe, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

"What has happened?" asked Lady Marion, softly. "Pray, pray, do not cry so bitterly."

But Lola sobbed and sobbed again. She tried to draw herself away from Lady Marion's kindly encircling arms; and although the latter did her best to soothe her and speak loving words, no response was to be won from the weeping girl but the long-drawn plaintive "Ay!" "Aye!" which on Spanish lips sounds like a sigh heaved from the uttermost depths of despair.

So, with heightened color and a brisker step, Lady Marion returned to her sister in the dining-room down-stairs.

CHAPTER XX.

AN ARMISTICE.

LADY HENRIETTE did not dare to look up as her sister entered, but she managed to say:

"Well?"

"Ill, I think. The girl seems at the point of death."

"Oh Marion!" and the guilty blush that overspread Lady Henriette's buxom cheeks betrayed her secret at once.

"What have you been doing or saying? I find her locked up, and she herself in an agony of tears. Who made her a prisoner? Did you?"

"She resisted my authority."

"Himppf! I thought as much. Henriette, you are simply the most extraordinary woman I ever met in my life. And may I inquire in what manner she resisted your authority?"

"I assure you, Marion, I did it for the best," cried Lady Henriette, quite flushed and eager. "I met her really in the most friendly spirit."

"That was kind of you, seeing what a hardened and depraved wretch she is, and how she forced herself upon us here, without waiting for our repeated invitations."

"I merely talked to her about her life with us, and explained my plans."

"You told her, I presume, that she was an uncultivated savage, and that you kindly proposed to make her life a burden to her."

"From that we diverged to other topics, and it came out, quite innocently, that she considers herself engaged to some young fellow of whom her grandfather disapproves. I told her at once that she must promise to hold no communication with this man so long as she was under our roof—"

"Your high principles do you infinite credit. Of course she agreed quite readily?"

"She flew into a terrible passion, spoke awful words in her own language—"

"Of which you do not understand a syllable."

"Swore!"

"You don't say so?"

"At least she crossed herself, misguided child, and that is another form of taking an oath; and finally, in the most violent manner, she declared that nothing could induce her to surrender her '*Paco*,' as she calls him. So I sent her to her room till she grew cooler, and could be reasoned out of her strange obstinacy."

For a time Lady Marion said nothing. She was smoothing out her dress and rubbing her hands rather excitedly one over the other.

"Henriette," she said at length, "I wish from the bottom of my heart you were still a child."

"Marion! why?"

"Because I should dearly like to box your ears. You deserve it—and worse. You have behaved most unwarrantably. Pray, who constituted you, and you alone, the sole arbiter of this girl's fate? By what right did you first pry into her secrets, and then take her to task in this cruel fashion? Is she not here by your invitation? Is she not, in the first place, our guest—our honored guest? Henriette, I have no patience with you. You deserve—you deserve—I should like to shake you!"

Lady Henriette bent like a reed before the storm. She felt she had been hasty and wrong, and now she could frame no sort of defense. But when the first fury of her sister's invective was spent, she asked submissively what she had better do.

"Go up and ask her pardon."

"O Marion! I cannot humble myself like that—not to such a child."

"Of course. You hesitate to make the only *amende* left to you."

"But, Marion, I have done the girl no harm."

"Is there no harm in terrifying her into fiddle-strings? Were you in the habit of spinning cock-chafers in your youth, of impaling butterflies or fishing with worms?"

"Well, Marion, if you think I ought—"

"Most certainly I think you ought."

So Lady Henriette went to Lola, and very timidly knocked at the door. No answer.

"May I come in?" she asked. Still no answer. In great trepidation she entered, half expecting to find the girl in a dead faint upon the floor.

Far from it. Lola was up, and busy apparently at her box. Her hat and shawl stood close by ready to be put on, and the whole room was disarranged—clothes here and there; and in one corner of the bed the lunch-tray so neatly set out by Mr. Houps, lay half upset, with cutlets, fruit, bread, salt, all jumbled together in a heap.

"My goodness me!" cried Lady Henriette, utterly taken aback by this new turn of affairs. "What are you doing?"

Lola turned upon her like a tigress at bay.

"*Que hago? No se puede ver?* (What am I doing? Can't you see?)"

"Where are you going?" went on Lady Henriette, hoping to get some more lucid explanation.

"*Fuera!* (Away!)"

"How can I possibly tell what you mean if you persist in talking Spanish? Do please explain yourself."

"I am going out—*fuera*—what you call away."

"But you must not, indeed you must not think of such a thing; we cannot let you."

"*Y porqué no?* (Why not?) You will lock me up, eh? Make me fast? Send me to the *Carcel*, to the prison, perhaps? Have you chains and cuffs and irons? Bring them, tie me, fasten me, whip me—but I will not stay with you."

"Dolores, pray do not use such dreadful language. We desire really to be kind to you, if you will but let us."

Lola laughed a little scornful laugh.

"Love! how then do you show your love? By blows and worse usage than the donkey gets when he will not carry his load? No, señora, I cannot trust to your affection, nor will I submit to your reproof."

"You will not forgive me then?" said Lady Henriette, making a last appeal, and putting out her hand.

"No," replied Lola, with a vigorous shake of her head. And Lady Henriette returned to her sister, who was sitting stiff and imperturbable just where she had been left.

"Have you made your peace?"

"Well, not exactly."

"She would not allow you to do so? Just what I expected."

"I found her packing up, and declaring she would leave the house at once."

"I don't wonder at it."

"But what shall we do with her?"

"Send Mrs. Bridle up to ask her what time she would like to have the carriage, and whether she would prefer the 3.45 or to wait for the morning express."

"You do not mean that?"

"If she thinks of leaving us we ought to assist. Our first duty is to fall in with her wishes. But I don't think she will persist in this when she has had a little time to recover from her ill-usage. Send up Bridle. The child knows her better than any of us, and will be more at ease with her."

"What does it all mean, my pretty?" asked the lady's maid, on reaching Lola's room. "M'lady is in a fine taking. And to see the mess your things is in! Why"—a light broke in on her—"you ain't a going away again, just after you've come?"

Lola put up her face to be kissed, and said:

"I like you. But she—*la gorda*—the stout one, is more savage than a stinging scorpion."

"What did she do to you?" asked Mrs. Bridle.

Lady Henriette had made no mention to the maid of what had occurred, but had merely commissioned her to inquire what time Miss Dolores would like to have the carriage.

"I spoke to her of *Paco*—my lover—and she scolded me and locked me in here. Am I then a naughty *criatura*, still a child, an infant, to be punished by whipping and cross words? I will go rather to my cruel *abuelo*. He is at least of my own blood, and to him I can talk in my own tongue. He will not refuse to take me back when he knows that I am sad and miserable."

"You've no call to be sad and miserable here, my bright one," said Mrs. Bridle, giving her a kiss. "M'lady don't mean no harm, only she won't be thwarted. When she says Yes, yes you must say too. If it's No, then you must pretend to agree even if you don't. That's all you've got to do."

Lola raised her head proudly:

"You are her *criada*, her servant. I am not to obey her orders. Nor will I."

"Ah, miss! all've got to obey Lady Henriette," went on Mrs. Bridle, sagely nodding her head. "All, from Lady Georgina to Simon Filcher, the gardener's boy—that's to say, all except Lady Marion, of course. *She don't care—*"

"Lady Marion, the pretty old dame? (*La vieja bonita?*) Then to her will I go to seek help and protection."

"Which you shall have, my dear," said Lady Marion herself, entering at the moment. "So you are better? That will do, Bridle. You need not stay. You are better now, Dolores? and you will not run away from us all at once?" and with that Lady Marion stroked her hair and kissed her on the forehead.

"Señora, I will do as you may bid me. Whatever you ask that will I perform with my whole heart."

"No more tears, no more quarrels, then? Come, now, and make your peace with Lady Henriette."

They found her in the same morning-room. She came forward to meet them with rather a constrained air. Yet Lola could afford, in the full flush of victory, to be magnanimous. The apology she offered was so spontaneous and so prettily spoken that peace was at once assured.

Nevertheless, when this first storm was over, Lola, although triumphant, had still some serious misgivings as to the happiness of her future life at Fairfax, and it soon became pretty evident that she was doomed to spend many weary and monotonous hours in her new home.

After lunch she was left almost entirely to her own devices. Lady Georgina was really ill, and Lady Marion so far from strong that the part she had just played in our heroine's defense necessitated a complete rest of some hours. With these two thus *hors de combat*, Lady Henriette was cumbered about much serving. She was a devoted nurse—a little too despotic perhaps—of the class who carry out dietary scales to the letter, and administer doctor's prescriptions with the utmost fidelity; but her attentions were really affectionate and unwearied. Thus pre-occupied, however, she could give but little time to her young guest, even had she been really anxious to do so, and not, as was really the case, still shy and uncertain how to deal with her. Therefore, she made only a short effort to do the honors, and setting Lola down to a picture-book in the drawing-room, disappeared.

What was the child to do with herself? The weather was atrocious; bleak winds were howling outside, and the rain beat pitilessly against the panes. Of the book that Lady Henriette had given her—it was a volume of Allan's "European Guide"—she soon grew weary, and looking around for others, found only such solid literature as the works of Miss Hoffland and Hannah

More, with Sturm's "Reflections," and "Watts on the Mind;" any of which she would have gladly exchanged for a novel by Trueba or Fernan Caballero, for "Don Quixote," or the "Romancero General de España." Restless, she rose and wandered in and out of the room. In the hall was a fine organ on which Lady Marion had, in times past, been a proficient, but the instrument was beyond our Lola, and so was the piano, with keys stiff from disuse. If there had only been a guitar at hand! but there was not, nor anything else to remind her of her home in the sunny South. How different, indeed, was this cold, inhospitable England, this cheerless country which had sealed her mother's death warrant, from that other land which she had just left so much against her will! Already at Gibraltar the flowers were in full bloom; in the garden at Rosia Cottage the roses blossomed in rich clusters; fuschias grew like trees; geraniums, indigenous to the Mediterranean shores, threw all around without care in luxuriance, and many-hued as Joseph's coat; carnations flourished, heliotrope also, and the datura and camelias were plentiful though in the open air; azaleas, too; the passion-flower, the stone-blue plumbago, and the gorgeous Bougainvillia, with calix as big as a plate; and with all these a wealth of leafage on shrub, brushwood or tree. Here, at Fairfax, as she gazed from one of the wide windows away across terrace, garden, and flat meadow land nearly submerged by the swollen stream, there was as yet not a symptom of spring, not a flower, not even the pale snow-drop or timid crocus. The hedge-rows were all brown and bare; the sky was lowering with leaden clouds; the river and the lake it made lay gray and cold; the tree-stems were inky black with long-continued rain. You might indeed have thought that color was banished altogether from the earth, but for the value gained by the red-brick walls and emerald fields in the prevailing dullness of the scene.

Was it strange that the prospect should exercise a marked effect upon Lola? This bright creature, born under the warm sun and bred among brilliant colors and glancing lights, was by nature easily moved either to laughter or tears; and now the motive was all towards melancholy and woe. Under the sombre influence of this cheerless English landscape, her own loneliness and her present grievous lot, she became a prey to a crowd of sorrowful thoughts—sad memories of her lover—sad yearnings for the mother she had never known, who had once mourned as she herself was doing, equally forlorn and unhappy, pining for the life-giving sun and the joyous beauty of the bright South.

So Lola sat by the window and grieved, till presently her face, like an April sky, was overcast, and the hot tears fell fast

as an April shower. No one noticed her. The butler came and went, looking to the great fire that blazed on the hearth, setting out the tray for afternoon tea, and then, as evening drew on, bringing candles and noiselessly closing all the shutters save at the window where Lola sat. He thought she might be asleep, and he was too well trained to risk disturbing her; but when he returned to the servants' hall, he observed that the foreign young lady was more like a statyer than a Christian girl. "She've sat by the window since lunch, and it's my belief she'd sit there, if you'll let her, till she's took out with her toes uppermost."

Whereupon warm-hearted Mrs. Bridle, guessing at the real state of the case, stole up to the drawing-room, and gently approached Lola to administer such consolation as lay in her power. Her warm sympathy won Lola's heart. She was not, then, utterly desolate; and she clung to Mrs. Bridle's rough hand with real gratitude, and bathed it with her tears.

"But come, deary!" said Mrs. Bridle, "it is time to dress."

"Dress?" asked Lola in amazement, as she wiped her eyes that she might the more clearly scan the other's face. "I have not just got out of bed. I am dressed. How mean you, then, to dress?"

"Why, for dinner. My ladies dress in evening toilet every night of their lives. M'lady Henriette's just coming down. The first bell went half an hour ago. You've not got much time."

State dinners had not been included in the training at the convent school. Lola could not comprehend why any particular ceremony should surround a meal which was to her simply supper and nothing more. Why should Bridle drag forth from the wardrobe the one *roba de gala* which she possessed--that memorable ball-dress of white and maize in which she had danced at San Roque Fair.

"*Con que!* there is a *funcion* to-night--a *fiesta*, a *fête*, then?"

"Feast! Yes, feast you shall, my pretty, and much you want it too, I expect. No lunch, and yet no tea all through the live-long day! It's a mussy you ain't a dropped."

Five regular meals and a snack at odd times between, were indispensable to keep Mrs. Bridle in good health.

"But what do we do to-night?"

"Why, eat."

"Not dance? In that *roba* I dance."

"This a ball-gown!" cried Bridle in great depreciation. "Wait till you see what we'll get for you against the next assembly at Glimpsbury Town Hall. Ah! but you do want a

power of things. No gloves, no shoes, no costumes; not one bonnet in your box; and this hat!"—yet it was considered a master-piece at one of the best milliner's on the Rock—"you'd better give it to one of the house-maids."

With a feeling akin to complacency Lola suffered herself to be decked out. There is always a certain charm for young girls in brave apparel. Lola with pleasure put a spray of crimson fuschia in her hair, and wore another in her breast. Here and there, too, in the festoons of the creamy yellow dress, the maid with deft fingers fastened bunches of the same red flower. No other ornaments had Lola save a locket—Frank's gift—and on her finger the ring of betrothal, which in her eyes was as sacred as if the Holy Father himself had blessed it. Thus simply attired she walked into the drawing-room with the stately step of a Spanish maiden, straight as a sapling, with head erect, flushed face and radiant eyes, proud and beautiful—every inch a queen.

"Henriette may think to teach her the *convenances*, and the lesson may do the child good; but it will not be easy to improve her walk," said Lady Marion to herself, as from behind the shaded lamp at her own table she watched the entrance of Lola.

Something of the same thought passed through Lady Henriette's mind, and with it a sensation—not exactly of fear, but rather of respect for this young creature of such independent carriage and fearless air. But she said at once in tones of apology:

"I trust, Dolores, you have not found the time hang heavy on your hands? We ought not to have left you so long alone."

"*No hay de que*—There is no need to apologize," Lola replied, simply, bowing her thanks.

"My sister Georgina could not well be left all the afternoon, and Marion here—"

"This is a sick, stupid house you have come to," Lady Marion went on. "One or other of us is certain to be in the doctor's hands."

"I hope you are better, you?" cried Lola eagerly to Lady Marion; and it was clear that already her heart had gone out to her champion of the morning.

"Oh, yes; but I am a poor creature at best. And what did you do with yourself, Dolores?"

"*Nada*, nothing. I sat here by that window and thought—thought of my *Paco* and my home."

She mentioned her lover's name softly, yet without faltering; and Lady Henriette was not sorry that dinner was announced just then. The subject was disagreeable, and if it could not be avoided altogether, Lady Henriette preferred to shirk it for the present.

Yet over and over again during the whole dinner she was itching to be up and at Lola. This solemn meal was exceedingly strange and curious to our heroine. There had always been in her grandfather's house as much to eat as could be desired, but little ceremony in disposing of it. She and Josefa had got through their meals as best they could, certainly without the slow state and gorgeous display which are the adjuncts of dinner in good society in England. Here, at Fairfax, the table glittered under the soft light of a hanging lamp; it was gay with flowers, plate and cut glass. Not even in Spain could table-linen be seen more white and spotless. For the three ladies there were servants enough to warrant the notion that all three were helpless cripples. There was food enough for a regiment. Then the succession of courses surprised and confused her. The soup came first, of course—that she understood. But why fish next? Where was the *cocido*, the piece of beef and beans, the solids of which the soup has been made? And where did the dinner come from? There was nothing to be seen on the table but fruit and flowers; where then did the dishes stand which Houps so deferentially offered her in bewildering succession?

Lola strove to continue cool and self-possessed, as a Red Indian assumes stoical indifference in the presence of the wonders of civilization. Had it been possible for her to maintain an attitude of stately inaction, all might have been well. But she was really hungry; she could not resist the food set in front of her; and in playing her part repeatedly she laid herself open to Lady Henriette had the latter dared to administer correction. Lola's *gaucheries* were perhaps venial, but they were obvious. She ate her soup in a manner that was not agreeable to Lady Henriette, and she held her knife and fork in a fashion that was strange, and therefore wrong. When she finished eating, she laid them cross-wise on her plate, and not, as we do, side by side. Again, it shocked the good lady when Lola in the temporary absence of all the servants from the room, rose to help herself to bread from the sideboard: and the last blow was struck when Mr. Houps offered the young lady a dish of macaroni, which Lola detested, and which she refused with a vigorously spoken, "*Dios, NO!*" There was no mistaking the expression, and Lady Henriette almost shuddered at the sound, forgetting that this form of speech is thought neither shocking nor profane on foreign lips.

At all these things and more did Lady Henriette inwardly chafe, longing to give expression to her disapproval; but she was held in check, at least for the present, by Lady Marion's cold, gray eye, and not a little also by the reputation Lola had already established for spirit to fight her own battles.

At length the long dinner came to an end. Conversation had not been very brisk; there was a difficulty in exchanging ideas for want of common language. Lady Marion was evidently still suffering; she spoke little, and often screwed up her eyes and forehead as if struggling against pain. Lady Henriette was not happy because she could not have it all her own way with Lola. Our heroine herself was a little uncomfortable and ill at ease. It was a sensible relief to all when they returned to the drawing-room.

Lady Henriette, going almost immediately to her sister's sick room, left the others alone.

Lola, with a sudden impulse, got up and kissed Lady Marion on the forehead.

"What can I do for you, señora? You are in pain—let me try and soothe it,"

"Nothing; I am often like this. It will be sad for you I fear. What are we to find for you to do?"

"I will take care of you. You are good and kind to me; I will be your daughter."

"Come here, close; let me look at you;" and Lola went round to face Lady Marion in the full light.

This was her brother George's daughter—George, who had been her favorite brother, for whom she had fought through thick and thin; petting him when a child, stinting herself to give him money when at college from her own allowance, loving him with a devotion such as none of the many suitors who had wooed her could ever win. George's daughter! But George had been fair, with locks brown and curling, fresh cheeks and blue eyes, as became a Saxon youth. This girl was in truth quite different—an exotic—a child of another clime—a brown-eyed, olive-cheeked Spanish maiden.

"You are like your mother," said Lady Marion at length with a sigh. She had sought in vain for something to remind her of George.

"Did you know her then, lady?" asked Lola, eagerly.

"No, child."

Our heroine's face fell.

"*Madre desdichada de mi alma!* (Unfortunate mother of my soul!) I never saw her, lady, but her memory I love."

"We will try, Dolores, to take her place," said Lady Marion, solemnly. "It is the least that we owe you."

Then Lady Marion rose to retire for the night, and so ended the first day Lola spent at Fairfax Manor.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES.

NEXT morning was bright and fine. The early sun woke Lola, and she threw up the window to bask the better in its beams and listen to the songs of the birds. Her room looked out towards the front of the house, upon a wide, level lawn of short green turf, in the centre of which stood a dovecote, around which wheeled in rapid flight a crowd of busy birds forever on the wing. On this side, the weather-stained red-brick walls, with their white stone mullions and groins, were half-covered with ivy centuries old, clinging close to the house, with which its life was indissolubly bound. Just beyond the lawn and the lodge gates was a by-road leading to the farm and the main highway, some half mile distant, and along this came an occasional cart, or a wagon going to the farm, or a few cows bound in the same direction; sometimes a laboring man or boy with a note or two of rude song, and above these rose the sounds of the farm-yard—lowing kine, the whinny of a horse, the harsh scream of a peacock, and the crow of the more commonplace chanticleer.

The quiet morning fostered reflection, and Lola found herself pondering over the past and wondering what might be in store in the future. Did her grandfather intend that she should stay here at Fairfax forever? That could hardly be. In spite of all, his affection for her was such that he could not suffer her to remain long from his side. His only object had been to separate her from Frank; and in that for the present he had been quite successful. For the present only; this separation was not to be endured forever. Nothing should induce her to surrender her lover; this clear determination she repeated to herself several times, and found therein no little comfort. Poor *Paco!* and what must he have thought of her disappearance? and what had been his uncle's answer? Lola was not so confident now, at an enforced distance from Frank, that she could bring herself to say No even if this uncle had refused his consent. Her grandfather and Frank's uncle might settle the difficulty between them.

But now it flashed across her mind that Frank must be quite in ignorance as to what had become of her. There was no one to tell him. Josefa could not, for she did not know. Certainly her cunning old *abuelo* would never divulge a word. Yet Frank ought to hear. She would herself write that very morning, and set all his doubts at rest. With that she drew towards the

window the small writing-table that stood in a corner, and proceeded to compose her first love-letter, now for the first time experiencing that curious empty consolation which comes from communicating even upon paper with a distant loved one.

She wrote in Spanish fluently, for her heart was full, and so was her paper soon—full of the story of her grandfather's trickery, full of sweet protestations of undying affection, while in between every grain of common-sense statement, lay bushels of that chaff-like hyperbole, which only a young girl in the full swing of a first affection has at command.

The time slipped by, and Lola had been employed thus for more than an hour, when Mrs. Bridle came to call her and assist her to dress.

"Miss Dolores!" she cried, "whatever are you a doing of at this time of the morning? You'll get your death!"

It was imprudent perhaps, and Lola herself admitted that she was slightly chilled; but she had only just become aware of it. Was it likely that she would feel cold when she was writing to her Frank? Nevertheless she was glad to go to bed again while a fire was being lighted; and this delayed her so much, that, by the time she got down-stairs, she found herself several minutes late for breakfast. Both ladies—Georgina still kept her room—were seated waiting, and Lady Henriette, who had raised punctuality to the rank of a cardinal virtue, looked as if the sin which Lola had committed was blacker than robbing a church. Yet she did not dare do more than remark that breakfast in *that* house was always at nine precisely.

"Perhaps Bridle did not tell you," suggested Lady Marion.

"It's written up in large letters over the mantel-piece in every room in the house."

"I knew, but I was busy."

"So early?"

"I was writing a letter, to"—should she confess to this first love-letter? A moment's consideration decided her. She would conceal nothing. There was nothing in her love of which she need be ashamed. "I was writing to *Paco*."

Lady Marion raised her eyebrows, and Lady Henriette flushed almost angrily. This was throwing down the gauntlet indeed. But since the great affray on the day previous Lady Henriette had reviewed her position carefully, and had come to believe that if she was to succeed at all with Lola, it must be otherwise than by overt attempts at coercion. Therefore she smothered her rising wrath, and suffered the reference to *Paco* to pass unchallenged. This wayward child was hardly to blame. How was it possible for her to know better until she had been taught? Even now she could hardly speak a dozen words of decent English;

and Lady Henriette saw plainly that the first step towards that process which she called "forming the girl's mind" must be a common platform in regard to language. This was excellent reasoning, of course. But Lady Henriette made a sad mistake in assuming the *role* of governess. Lola considered her ladyship sufficiently antipathetic already. Viewed as a teacher, Lady Henriette assumed the proportions of a real enemy.

The first lesson was amusing enough. Lola often translated literally her Spanish idioms, and the turns of expression sounded oddly enough in English ears.

"What will you take?" asked Lady Marion, as soon as Lola was seated at the breakfast table. "Fish, cutlets, eggs?"

"Please, a pair of eggs."

"A pair of what?" quickly inquired Lady Henriette.

"Eggs, *huevos*."

"My dear, you should say two eggs, or a couple of eggs, not a pair!"

"*Gracias!* I will remember."

By and by, when breakfast was over, Lady Henriette, who was bent upon being gracious, proposed to Lola a walk through the shrubberies and green-houses. Lola smiled gratefully, and the bell was rung.

"Tell Mrs. Bridle to bring down Miss Bellota's hat and cape."

"Please, and two gloves," added Lola quickly.

"Why, what do you want two gloves for?"

"*Pues!* one for each hand."

"But, Dolores, we say a pair of gloves, a pair of boots, a pair of—"

"Stays!" suggested Lady Marion, laughing.

"But not a pair of eggs! It is, then, very fastidious, very incommoding, this English idiom of yours. And suppose the horse or the donkey gives you two kicks, do you say two kicks, or a pair of kicks, as we do in Spanish?"

Lady Henriette looked as if she would have liked to administer a "pair" of boxes on the ear to her young friend, but she said nothing.

Lola having twice paraded up and down a side-walk, next asked the way to the *Correo*—the post-office.

"I want to send my letter."

"Cannot you trust us to post it for you?" asked Lady Henriette.

Lola shook her head doubtfully, and her ladyship was evidently pained at the distrust implied.

"There is no post-office within miles. Our letters go in a bag every afternoon. You can send yours in the same way."

"It will go?"

"How can you ask such a question? A letter is sacred. You will believe me if I give you my word?"

Lady Henriette put out her hand, and in doing so Lola met her eyes—clear, honest eyes, belonging to a gentlewoman.

"Señora, I trust you;" and this was the first step to a better understanding.

But there were rocks ahead and one especially dangerous. Lady Henriette could not forget that Dolores was a Roman Catholic. In her eyes Catholics were misguided victims, calling first for commiseration, and next for conversion and cure. She had aired these sentiments openly long before, when Lola had first been invited to Fairfax, and had submitted with a bad grace to Lady Marion's positive disapprobation of all attempts at proselytizing. It was almost a relief to Lady Henriette when old Bellota refused to allow his granddaughter to go to England. Since then matters had become more complicated. Glimpshire—of which the Fairfaxes had ever been a leading family—was an old-fashioned county, select, conservative, and somewhat short-tempered—a county remarkable for strong prejudices, for inherited likes and dislikes, and for feuds and friendly feelings passed on from generation to generation like heir-looms and family jewels. Politics had long divided it into two hostile camps, and of late years it had been much torn by religious dissensions. The original duel between High Church and Low had grown with the increasing quarrelsomeness of the age into a sort of free fight, in which joined good Churchmen, as they loved to style themselves, Revivalists, Ritualists, and adherents of the Church of Rome. The tendencies at Fairfax were decidedly "Low;" Lady Henriette's friend the rector—a substantial staff upon whom the good lady leaned much, with no light weight—having often expressed his opinion that even dissent was less objectionable than Papacy. He was the more outspoken in this respect because Lord Hetherington, one of the leading magnates of the county, and a parishioner of his own, had recently "gone over;" and he took this change of faith, not unnaturally, as a slight to himself and the doctrine he preached. His views were Lady Henriette's; hence, when it was known that Lola was really coming to them, the same question cropped up, surrounded by even greater difficulties than before.

There had been a battle-royal between the sisters on the subject—Henriette, fighting with the courage of a fanatic, defending her dearest convictions; Marion equally strong in support of universal toleration; while Lady Georgina, in a most uncomfortable state of mind, halted and hesitated between the two belligerents, just as England does in Continental wars—trying to be on good terms with both sides, and yet to keep out of the quarrel.

"But, Marion," Lady Henriette had said, "if she wishes to attend Mass she must go to Hetherington; there is no other chapel except at Glimpsbury, and that is fourteen miles away. You know we have ceased to call at the Castle since Lord Hetherington seceded."

"That was your affair. You chose to speak of him as a weak, irresolute man, without an opinion of his own; and when he heard of it he very naturally took offense."

"And she will want a director, some one to confess to. Are we to admit that dark-looking priest into our house?"

"Why not? I believe Mr. Wardour is a perfect gentleman. Are you afraid he would run away with the spoons?"

"He is one of the Yorkshire Wardours," said Lady Georgina, siding with Lady Marion, "and he would have had the property if he had not turned monk."

"How could he expect to inherit after that?" said Henriette.

"Oh no, of course not," replied Georgina, promptly, anxious to propitiate the other side.

But as usual, Lady Marion had it her own way. Lola was to follow the dictates of her conscience, and to worship in the manner to which she had been all her life accustomed. Lady Henriette had, however, only yielded a sullen and half-hearted consent—only with a bad grace had she humbled herself before Lord Hetherington, writing to him to explain that a young Spanish friend was staying in their house, and that they hoped she might be allowed to attend the services at Hetherington Castle.

Nevertheless, though over-borne on the main question Lady Henriette cherished a hope that in the end, by some round-about process, Lola might yet be weaned from the error of her ways. What might not be effected by the ministrations of a good and zealous man like Mr. Featherstone, their rector?

Therefore it was that, within a day or two of our heroine's arrival, this good and zealous clergyman looked in to lunch. A well-meaning person, of Irish extraction, red-faced, full-voiced, and not exactly well-bred. He talked loudly and much, chiefly to Lady Henriette, for Lady Marion's replies were discouraging, and preceded always by the chilling "Himpff!" He patted Lola on the head with some freedom, which she would have resented had she not been told he was the *cura*, the *padre*, or priest of the parish.

"We shall see you at church on Sunday?" he asked, very blandly, regardless of Lady Marion's frown.

"Oh, yes—Church. I am not *beata, devote*, what you call it—blessed; but I attend to my duties, always."

These were joyful words in Lady Henriette's ears. Church

with her meant the Established Church. All other places of worship she called chapels.

"Miss Bellota is a Roman Catholic," interposed Lady Marion, with cold emphasis.

"Oh, indeed! I was not exactly aware."

"She will go to Hetherington on Sunday, and I shall probably accompany her."

"You?" cried Henriette, aghast. "O Marion, is this necessary?"

"Really, my dear Lady Marion," went on Mr. Featherstone, following on the same side, "I fear that your appearance at a Roman Catholic chapel will be attended with very serious misconstruction."

He never felt safe now. Since Lord Hetherington's "perversion" he trusted no man, nor woman, nor child.

"A young lady, Mr. Featherstone, can hardly go to a private house alone and unattended."

"But, Marion, Bridle would have been quite sufficient, and Bridle is—"

"More orthodox than I am? I don't think so. But pray do not distress yourself. I have no intention of deserting you, Mr. Featherstone—at present." The last words had the desired effect.

The rector managed to mutter something about full confidence and so forth, but he was far from happy in his mind.

Lola had listened as far as she was able, but she could not understand it at all. She had arrived on Wednesday, and this was Friday. It had occurred to her already as somewhat strange that the ladies did not fast, but she presumed they had a dispensation. Yet now the *padre cura* was very devoted to his lunch, not denying himself cutlets nor any of the good things upon the table. And what was this distinction of Churches? Were they not all of one faith? Why should the *padre cura* ask her to go to one church and Lady Marion say she should go to another? It was all past her comprehension.

More astonishing still was it when Lady Henriette took her, the day following, to the Rectory. Mrs. Featherstone, a nice, quiet little body, felt honored at the visit, and showed off her children, from Tommy the eldest to the baby last born, with pride and pleasure. She petted and praised Lola, admired her hair, and said it was a treat to see such a beautiful face.

"And who is she?" asked Lola afterwards.

"Mrs. Featherstone, the clergyman's wife."

"The *cura's* wife! Impossible!"

"But she is indeed."

"The *cura* married! O, señora, *no puede ser*. In the Church the priests do not marry."

"Ours do."

"How? ours! Are you not too *Catolicas, Catolicas Romanas*, as am I?"

"We are Protestants—heretics."

"Ah, no!" almost screamed Lola; "not that awful word—not heretics. They will be damned." She brought the word out quite as coolly as might a bargee using it as a compliment to his wife's eyes.

"Child, it is you who are using terrible language. But do you not know that in England we are all—almost all, that is to say—of the Protestant or Reformed Church?"

"Lady, I am strange to your ways, as to your language. I do not comprehend."

"You call the Pope head of your Church. We do not. The Sovereign—king or queen—is head of ours."

"Your king is then a priest?"

"No; we have a queen."

"*Que burla!* (How absurd!) A female priest!"

"And we do not believe in saints."

"*Coma!*" quite horrified.

"Nor in the Virgin Mary."

"Not in the Blessed Mother?" and she crossed herself.

"We do not fast, nor say aves, nor tell our beads, nor keep saints' days," went on Lady Henriette, delighted at the opportunity of speaking out her mind.

"*Peor y peor!* (Worse and worse!) But it makes me sad: I grieve for you. And you are all the same—all?" she was thinking of Frank Wriottesley.

"Yes; or nearly all."

"And *Paco* too! *Que lastima!*—how sad!"

For the rest of the day Lola remained silent and overpowered. But just before they separated for the night, she came to Lady Henriette as if struck with a bright idea.

"Señora, let me ask you one favor. I like you—I do indeed. It grieves me to think that you will be damned."

"Gracious heaven, child! do not repeat that awful expression. What is it that you want?"

"Do not be Protestant any more."

"Why, what does this mean?" asked Lady Marion, surprised.

"It means that I have caught a Tartar. I have been hoping to do her good, and now she is trying to convert me."

"You will not?" went on Lola, sadly, "*Paco* will, I think, if I ask him."

"I think so too," said Lady Marion. "If you look at him like that he would give up most things except one."

"And that is what?"

"Yourself!"

Next morning, Sunday, Lola appeared at breakfast, greatly to Lady Henriette's surprise, in a black mantilla.

"Why, what is this?" she asked. "The day is not specially cold. It is hardly wise to cover up your head in-doors. Are you unwell?"

"It is Sunday. Am I not going to Mass?"

"Yes, but not in that dress surely."

"In this way all ladies go to Mass."

"You cannot persuade me to believe that."

"They do, truly, in Spain."

"But this is not Spain. Do, please, to oblige me, take it off."

"Take what off?" said Lady Marion, coming in at the moment. "That mantilla? It is most becoming."

"Thank you, dear lady."

"I like it; and it will explain to the congregation who you are and why I am there."

"Then you really mean to go too, Marion?"

"Most assuredly."

"I hoped that perhaps you would think better of it. Have you calculated the effect it will have? When it is known that a Fairfax has been at a Roman Catholic place of worship, the whole country-side will be in an uproar."

"Henriette, I have made up my mind," said Lady Marion, shortly.

"It is a great grief to Mr. Featherstone." She would not surrender her point.

"Leave Mr. Featherstone to take care of himself. He is no favorite of mine."

"Nor of mine," put in Lola, energetically. "*Verlo y al diablo todo es uno.*"

"And what does that mean?" rashly asked Lady Henriette.

"To see him and the devil is all one."

"You brought it on yourself!" cried Lady Marion, laughing at her sister's face of horror.

"Such an old uncle!" continued Lola with increasing contempt in her voice, and with a gesture of mingled derision and disdain.

"Uncle! uncle! He is no relation of yours. What strange freak is this, child?"

"*Ya, ya! Que lo sé yo.* I know all about it. He is an uncle and an old uncle. Is not 'uncle' English for *tío*? Yes; well then in Spanish we call all such dried-up grapes old uncles."

"But he is a clergyman, a *padre*, a priest. You should respect him for that."

"Bah! no priest is he—to me. Why, he is married. Who has heard of a *padre* with a wife? No, no; he is an old heretic, and *El Calvo* will never let him into heaven."

"*El Calvo*?" asked Lady Henriette, but in a very doubtful voice of interrogation.

"St. Peter, who keeps the keys. He is bald—*calvo*—so say the stories of the saints, which I believe every word."

Soon afterwards the pony carriage was announced, and the two ladies drove off together to Hetherington Castle.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BLESSINGS OF PEACE.

LIFE was uneventful at Fairfax, and the days slipped by in tame, almost monotonous, sequence. Such an existence would have been nearly unbearable to the average English girl, but Lola had been trained to stay much at home, and to know no excitement—at least till Frank Wriottesley appeared upon the scene—except at rare intervals, and then of the mildest description. To rise early, chatter with Josefa, or assist her in the household, to stitch a little, braid her hair, or peep through the windows at the passers-by, these serious duties had sufficed to keep her busy from day to day. It was hardly grievous to her, then, to submit to all the rules that made up the dull routine of life at Fairfax.

But she was sensibly affected by the influences that surrounded her. Her exuberant spirits were toned down; she grew very gentle and subdued in manner. Only rarely, but then with the sudden gust of a Mediterranean squall, there rushed into her heart a wild longing to see her Frank once more. Through it all the good Ladies Fairfax did their best to make her happy. There was not at that season much gayety in the county, and she had to be satisfied with such amusements as were to be found at home, in-doors or out. For the latter they gave her a saddle-horse, and she took long rides, followed in state by a groom in livery. This exercise she grew to love more and more. It was so English—an English habit, such as her *Paco* loved; and it was but right that she, his future wife, should also appreciate it. No longer did it seem strange to her that English people should be so fond of the saddle. It was pure joy to her to give free reins to her horse and canter gaily along the grassy side slips that bordered all the Glimpshire roads. The rapid paces stirred all her pulses; every breath she drew gave her hope, courage, and new life. Returning thus strengthened and

invigorated, she found herself more contented with her lot, and almost ready to admit that, although in its first shock the sudden change of scene had been hard to bear, nevertheless it might be for her good that she had come to England. Now for the first time she was associated with true English gentlewomen; for the first time she began to tell herself how much she had to learn if she wished to become worthy of Frank Wriottesley.

So humble was she that she saw only her own unfitness, her ignorance, her lack of that indefinable air of breeding which sat so naturally upon her hostesses, and forgot the graces that were all her own—her fresh heart, pure mind, and loving, though passionate, temper,—no despicable gifts. The metal rang true beneath—pure and unalloyed, needing nothing but refinement to show forth its intrinsic worth. But all our heroine saw was the gulf that seemed to separate her from other English girls. As she was, she could not be fit to mate with Frank. Then, with impetuous determination, she resolved to improve herself. Good Lady Henriette was in the seventh heaven of delight when Lola voluntarily subscribed to the new scheme proposed for her education. Never was teacher more devoted nor pupil more eager to learn. Under such conditions Lola made rapid progress; and not alone information and accomplishments, but also in her ladyship's heart.

Glimpshire was not a gay county, but it took its recreation at proper and reasonable times. At certain epochs in the year it broke out, and, for a sober, sedate county, ran riot as if but just released from school. These epochs were as well known as the festivals of the Church, fixed with far more regularity, and just as solemnly observed. Every one in Glimpshire knew that the first ball of the Glimpshire Hunt took place the last week of November; that the sermon in aid of the County Asylum and Infirmary was preached on the Wednesday after Easter; that the first "Bow Meeting"—this was the dignified Glimpshire term for archery—came off at Glimpsbury upon the last Monday in July. Many Glimpshire people migrated to town for the season, of course, but their hearts remained always at home. Few went before Easter or remained after July. The proper support of county institutions weighed with them even before the exhibition or themselves and daughters at Princes, at Hurlingham, or in the Row. When any of the Glimpshire festivals were close at hand, the whole county rose to the occasion. All the country-houses round were filled with guests. Distances were quite ignored: twenty miles into Glimpsbury and out again was considered nothing. The hotels in the county town were filled to overflowing, and the town-council, with an eye to the main

chance, laid new metal on all the streets and highways, so that the extra traffic might be turned to advantage, even to the uttermost ounce.

Lola had been some weeks at Fairfax, when the approaching Infirmary Sermon became the topic of conversation at lunch. Lady Georgina was present, having now nearly recovered her strength.

"Can you dance, Dolores?" asked Lady Marion.

"Oh, yes!" with a slight blush.

"I have seen her," added Lady Henriette, laughing.

"And you can waltz?"

"I adore it."

"There will be a ball in Glimpsbury in another fortnight.

Would you like to go?"

"Yes, yes; *con muchissimo gusto*."

"Who talks of going to balls?" put in Lady Georgina.

"You, Henriette—at your time of life! I am ashamed of you."

"Dolores ought to go to the Infirmary Ball, and I may chap-eron her I suppose."

"Of course, and she ought to hold the plate!"

It must be mentioned that in the morning there was a sermon, at night a ball. The gathering for the one assured a good collection for the other; and it was the fashion for the whole country-side to appear at church. No effort was spared to make purse-strings open freely. Some shining pulpit-orator was specially engaged; the service was choral, admirably given; and in prominent seats about the centre of the aisle, and just below the preacher, a certain number of picked patients from the Infirmary were paraded to rouse to the highest pitch the sympathies of the charitable. More than this; it had been the custom from time immemorial—doubtless to give greater importance to the occasion, for the plates at the church door to be held by ladies—on one side the newest bride, on the other the freshest *débutant*.

It was to this that Lady Georgina referred. She had, herself, in ages past, held the plate; so too had Lady Marion; so too Henriette. But it had come to none of them to make their second appearance.

"Dolores hold the plate!" cried Lady Henriette. "Why, she does not belong to the county."

"Henriette! not when she is our—"

"Oh Georgina! please remember; and you promised—"

"I wish I had not. She ought to know," replied the old lady in high dudgeon.

Lola happily was unconscious that the reference had been made to her, and Henriette went on:

"Is it settled who is to preach?" she asked.

"Monsignor Capel or the archbishop," replied Lady Marion, promptly.

"In our church! Marion, it's quite dreadful to hear you talk."

Lady Henriette was occasionally ill at ease regarding her sister Marion's religious views.

"They are both admirable preachers, which is more than can be said for your friend, Mr. Featherstone."

"Well, I hope she'll get a husband, and then she'll hold the plate!" exclaimed Lady Georgina, who was not to be beaten from her point. "You'll have to tell her then," she added, with a knowing and decisive nod of her head. "Would you like a husband, dear child?"

"No, señora, thank you," replied Lola, quietly.

Her vow to Frank was sacred, and she could marry no one else. But she had sufficient good feeling to make no reference to her lover lest it might offend Lady Henriette. The subject was now scrupulously avoided between them. It was ground which neither liked to tread: and both were equally pleased when Lady Marion remarked with a preliminary hmpff:

"I used to be taught that it was indelicate to talk in this way of husbands." At which speech Lady Georgina felt very much aggrieved, and did not speak again for hours.

It was impossible for Lola to be otherwise than excited at the prospect of the ball. At first she asked herself whether it was right that she should go. Would Frank approve of her dancing with other *pollos* (young men)? And then she wished she had asked his permission when she wrote that letter, to which as yet she had received no reply. There was not a shadow of disloyalty in her love for Frank, and yet, in spite of all, she could not smother her childish eagerness for the coming ball. Such *funcions* were almost strange to her. She had never danced but at San Roque, had never taken part in a real ball, or done more than look down from a box upon one of the masquerades in the Gibraltar theatre during Carnival.

Mrs. Bridle, again, was little less excited, especially when Lady Henriette took her into confidence about the "ball-gown." The wardrobe which Lola had brought with her had been so meagre that one of the first duties of the lady's-maid had been to increase it by such dresses as could be got close at hand, or she could herself make up. But nothing of this kind would do for the Infirmary Ball. Nor could Lola be allowed to appear—as she herself supposed she must—in the much worn maize dress of which we have already heard. So a special command was sent to Madam Elise without Lola's knowledge, and her surprise was as great as her admiration when all this gorgeous apparel was produced, as if by magic, the night before the ball.

It was a marvel of the milliner's art: calculated to show off to the best advantage the peculiar beauty of a Spanish brunette. The color was a rich creamy white; the ornaments and trimmings of gold. First a tunic of cream-white *crêpe de Chine*, caught up on one side by a golden cord with hanging tassels, and beneath it a skirt of cream-colored silk. All the accessories were complete—a cream-white fan, shoes and gloves of the same delicate tint: and for head-dress, a cluster of exquisite marguerites in gold, which would shine in her splendid hair as the stars at midnight in the purple sky.

Lola almost screamed with delight. She was young and a woman. But she was grateful also, and kissed Lady Henriette with such demonstrative thanks that the latter felt repaid a thousandfold.

Next day the great occasion came. First of all the parade at church, the service at which, after some demur and consultation with her director, Father Wardour, Lola consented to attend. This was her first appearance in public. Public it was; for, without intentional irreverence, the gathering inside the church and afterwards at the doors was not unlike a fashionable assembly, a flower-show or a fancy-fair. Even within the sacred walls people found opportunities for looking about them. You see, it was a week-day, and the bonnets, to which on the Sabbath feminine eyes would be decorously blind, might now be openly and attentively scanned. And many eyes, male and female, found a convenient focus in the pew of the Ladies Fairfax. At the top sat Lady Marion, with her snow-white hair, delicate complexion, and beautiful features, maintaining still her reputation as a Glimpshire belle; in person scrupulously neat, dressed in admirable taste, as pretty and perfect an old lady as you would wish to see. At the other end was Lady Henriette's ample figure, in bright and somewhat showy apparel; a mellow, middle-aged English gentlewoman, with good-humored face. In the centre sat Lola, a complete contrast to both her neighbors, dressed all in black (upon this she insisted when attending church), with no color about her save her cherry lips and the red rose in her hair. During the greater part of the service she remained with face downcast. The ceremonial was new and strange, and she felt a little shy; but once those who watched her were treated to a full flash from her splendid eyes. Even in this crowded church, in spite of the local mayor in fur and chain, in spite of the cripples beneath the pulpit, amidst a congregation of all that was great and glorious in Glimpshire, our heroine was the centre of attraction. Numerous were the friends who came to claim acquaintance after church. Never for years had the Ladies Fairfax found the *jeunesse dorée* of Glimpshire more eager to call

their carriage; never since the days of their own youth had they been so vigorously pressed to come to the ball.

Till now they had dropped a little behind in the race of social gayeties. Sometimes, but rarely, the two younger sisters went in state to dine and stay three days at a neighbor's house.

Once in every summer they took their turn in giving the annual "Bow-Meeting," and in the winter they did their best to provide a fox in the Fairfax coverts, and breakfast for the Glimpshire Hunt; these were solemn duties incumbent on every Glimpshire landlord: but these accomplished, the Ladies Fairfax left racketings to younger generations, looking on with benevolent eyes, but without active participation.

Since Lola had come to the Manor it was a different affair. Some harmless gayety would do the girl good, and Lady Henriette was glad to avail herself of the first opportunity for bringing her out. Already, under the influence of her affection for Lola, which had developed with surprising rapidity, she was greatly occupied with projects to secure her *protégée's* happiness. For Lady Henriette cherished an ardent desire to see Lola well married in England. Was it right that such a pearl should be thrown away upon a nameless ne'er-do-well to whom she had pledged herself before she knew her own mind? Lady Henriette took it for granted that there could be but little to recommend this Gibraltar lover, since Mr. Bellota, a person of no great social position, openly disapproved of him. A match with some Glimpshire gentleman, of fair but moderate means, would bring this unsatisfactory affair to a summary conclusion.

Hence at the Infirmary Ball Lady Henriette had an eye to business the whole night. For the girl's sake she buried the hatchet and forgot more than one feud which the Fairfax family had inherited from remote antiquity. She forgave Mr. Tredcroft the part he had played in the last elections; she spoke for the first time in a dozen years to Sir Geoffrey Chisholm, with whom they had quarreled about a right of way; she even returned Lord Hetherington's greeting with a smile, and extended the same amnesty to Lord Hawtayne, his eldest son, whom she had of late apostrophized as a Jesuit in disguise. She was all beaming smiles and friendliness for everybody. How could she help being in the sweetest of tempers? Lola was a tremendous success; her beauty attracted every eye. The women glared at her, as they will at the acknowledged belle of a ball-room, and all the men were eager to be introduced and get the promise of a dance miles down on her card.

She had but to throw her handkerchief and choose. Yet the best among them were hardly to her taste. They were but slow companions. What did she care for the inanities of little

Tredcroft, whose conversation was confined to the one dreary topic of himself, who nipped his words with his lips so that half their meaning remained inside and the other half came out so mutilated that listening to him was like guessing mild conundrums? Or for Mr. Chisholm, the baronet's son, an irreproachable youth, already conscious of the grave duties of his position, a deep student of political economy, an authority on poor-laws, whose aspirations were "the House" and the career of a statesman? He bored Lola terribly with his erudite talk; his sentences were so long, and fraught with such weighty meaning, that they ranged far over her head like projectiles from a rifled gun. Mr. Chisholm said afterwards that Lola seemed quite uneducated; she had never heard of a school-board, and her notions were quite unsound on the subject of out-door relief. At first she thought Jack Fortescue would be a pleasanter partner. He was cheery and good-tempered, had a ringing laugh of his own, after the manner of Frank Wriottesley; but he was too brusque and off-hand, rushing into talk as he might at a five-barred gate, and using slang phrases, which were all so much High Dutch to ears as yet barely accustomed to plain and simple English. She listened in utter amazement to this large young man as he rattled on, and could not answer one tithe of the questions that he put to her. "I told her we had chopped a fox that morning in cover," Jack confided to a friend afterwards, "and she thought I'd said we'd *shot* him—I give you my word. She's a good mover, but, bless you, raw, raw as a five-month filly."

The only man that won favor in her sight was Lord Hawtayne. In the first place, he reminded her—ever so slightly—of Frank, being, like him, tall, blue-eyed, and with light-brown hair. This was enough to give Lola's voice an *empressement* when she spoke to him, and her eyes a brilliancy when they met his, which, without some such excuse, would have been the veriest coquetry in the world. But Lord Hawtayne had traveled; he had some knowledge of Castilian, and had once been at Gibraltar in his yacht. Lola could speak to him of old familiar scenes, and he could tell her more of Spain than she knew herself. In this way they soon became fast friends; so friendly, indeed, that many people noticed it, and in three of those present at the ball it gave rise to serious thought.

Rumor, better informed than Lady Henriette, said that Lord Hawtayne would not follow his father in his secession to the Romish Church. In this he went rather with his mother, the Countess, who had been seriously annoyed at the change. The father, therefore, would gladly have encouraged Lola as an ally, who might help him to win Hawtayne to his way of thinking. On the other hand, Lady Hetherington viewed her with suspicion as

a designing little Paptist specially imported to entrap and seduce her son.

Last of all, Lady Henriette was not in the least anxious that Lord Hawtayne should throw himself at Lola's feet. She wanted to make a match for her charge, but was moderate in her desires, and did not fly at the highest game. Lola was a treasure, but it was for many reasons advisable that she should not make too good a match. There was the question of her birth; this would crop up by and by, and would probably cause complications. And more than this, there was her religion. Lord Hawtayne might, with Lola at his side, be lost like his father. She could never be his wife with his mother's approval; and the Countess had always given herself such insufferable airs, that Lady Henriette had no idea of humbling herself to so arrogant a dame. On the whole, she decided that it would be best to throw cold water at once on the intimacy between Lola and Lord Hawtayne.

That night our heroine was taken to task.

"Was I wrong?"

"No; not quite that; but Lord Hawtayne would never do for you."

"Do?" Every now and then the idiomatic use of a simple word perplexed her.

"I mean that it would hardly be"—"an equal match," she was about to say, but it stuck in her throat. She could not admit, as she looked at her, that Lola would not be a fitting consort for any potentate in Europe.

"Would you like to marry him?"

"O señora!" Lola blushed vividly.

With these words of Lady Henriette's there rushed in on her an idea that she had been to some extent disloyal to Frank.

"Why do you say such things? Am I not promised already—to *Paco*? To *Paco* only can I give my hand, because he, and he only, has my heart."

Each alternative was distasteful to Lady Henriette; but of the two, Lord Hawtayne was far preferable to the unknown lover abroad. Therefore, when the young lord looked in at the Manor—quite by accident—next day, he met with smiles from the elder lady, where, remembering her looks at the ball, he expected frowns. But, on the other hand, where he had hoped for a cordial reception, he found only a cold greeting.

Lola, after what Lady Henriette had said, was alive to the enormity of her offense. Not another sign of encouragement would she give Lord Hawtayne; her love was entirely for Frank Wriottesley, and she would never again be guilty—even by implication and unknowingly—of faithlessness to him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PEPE IN TROUBLE.

WE left Frank Wriottesley on the race-course at Gibraltar just after the defeat of his horse.

It was certainly a bitter disappointment, and the consequences it entailed might be serious in the extreme. But his own losses, although sufficiently severe, Frank would have endured without a murmur. It was for others that he felt more than for himself. This sudden and unexpected overthrow of the Bat must have hit many of his friends right hard, for the horse at the last was a prime favorite. He feared that others might blame him, and half fancied already that men looked askance at him, as if they were suspicious of his share in the great fiasco.

And yet Frank had many friends who would gladly go far to serve him. One or two, such as Jeffries, a major in the Halberdiers, had long prophesied that harm would come to Frank from his intimacy with the Sproules. There were some old stagers in the regiment who knew Tony Sproule by heart, and liked him less the more they knew of him.

Frank, as he rode slowly home that evening, was not over-pleased when Jeffries overtook him, expecting little commiseration in his misfortune.

"Bad job!" said the major with characteristic brevity; "all your own fault."

"Thank you! a man when he's down likes to be told he has made a fool of himself. Good-night! I think I'll ride on."

"Stop, man! don't be huffy. Stop, I say," went on Jeffries, laying his hand on Frank's bridle. "I want to talk to you. You wouldn't quarrel with an old friend over such a trivial, wretched affair?"

"It's far from trivial to me. Too bad altogether for chaff."

"I thought it was a facer, and that's why I wanted five words with you. If I can help you, Frank—you know what I mean."

"No, no," replied Frank, softened at once. "My dear Jeffries, you are kindness itself, but I shall have no difficulty in meeting my engagements. And I can raise anything I want. There's Bellota in the background."

"Better marry his granddaughter," said Jeffries, laughing. Frank's flirtation with Lola had not escaped every eye.

"No such luck!" replied Frank, sighing. The loss of Lola was still the most grievous burden he had to bear.

"Keep up your heart, I have no doubt it will come right if you wish. But about this race! It was a surprise?"

"Of course. I would have laid all I was worth upon the horse."

"Then there was foul play somewhere?"

"Not a doubt of it; but I cannot for the life of me make out how. I have dropped a lot, yet I'd willingly pay as much more to get at the bottom of the villainy."

"I think I can throw some light upon the matter."

"No! How?"

"That Spanish lad of yours, what became of him?"

"I sent him away for stealing corn."

"I saw him near your stable last night," said Jeffries. "After I had turned out the guard at Europa Pass, I came down the hill, and saw a figure close under the wall. I trotted up sharp, but he ran off. I could have sworn it was that lad. But Sproule came to the stable just at the moment."

"Sproule! are you sure? What time was this?"

"About three in the morning."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No; I waited for him to come out, half an hour or more, but I could stay no longer."

"He was in the stable?"

"Yes; inside."

Was it possible that Sproule could have played him false? Could he have been in collusion with Pepe?

As Frank rode on, he spoke little but pondered much. At one moment he blamed himself chiefly for being mixed up with the Sproules, then he abused Sproule in no measured terms; last of all, he turned with fresh virulence upon Pepe. He had not done with Pepe yet; and in this he was undoubtedly right, as the reader will perceive as the narrative proceeds. There would be a long account to settle between them and even now came a fresh item to swell the reckoning.

Frank and Jeffries together, jogging slowly up Waterport Street, met Pepe driving an "outside car" at top speed full towards them. These Irish cars are greatly patronized in Gibraltar for no intelligible reason. Other conveyances would be better suited to such narrow and tortuous streets, still they are as popular upon the Rock as in Dublin city or in the wilds of Connemara. Not less reckless are the drivers than their Hibernian brethren; for defiance of regulations and furious driving these "Scorpion" Jehus would probably carry off the palm.

Pepe had already made two journeys out to the North Front and back. Now that the races were at an end, and the hour for closing the gates approached, cars were in great demand, and he was eager to get down to the course to secure another

fare. He was standing up upon his box flogging his horse and yelling "Hey! Hey!" with strident voice. As he neared Frank and recognized his former master he increased his pace, driving full at him, so that our hero narrowly escaped being upset.

"*Grandisissimo!*" began Pepe, with a deep emphasis on the strengthened superlative.

"You scoundrel! I'll give you in charge," cried Frank, turning his horse's head, and with Jeffries pursuing.

But Pepe sped on. He was now fairly galloping. Racing down the street, the flying carman in front, Frank behind in full cry and gaining on him inch by inch, they soon came to the gate of the Casemate Barracks, a wicket kept open during the day, at which were a sentinel and a sergeant on duty. Here was gathered a small group of people; some returning from the races had halted for a moment to chat with others who had not been to the course; among these were one or two natives of the Rock, a few soldiers, and half a dozen children. With his vigorously unpleasant "Hey!" Pepe dashed in, scattering them right and left. A woman and child were knocked down by the flap of the car, the latter being little hurt, although it howled with terror, but the woman lay senseless and blood was streaming from a wound in her head.

The gate-sergeant, ordering a soldier to rush to the horse's head, proceeded to pull Pepe off the box. But the Spaniard's blood was stirred to its blackest depths, and he had no notion of surrendering tamely. First he struggled with all his might, then finding himself nearly powerless in his captor's grasp, without a second's hesitation he drew his knife from his sash, opened it unobserved with his teeth, and turning suddenly stabbed the sergeant in the chest. The two rolled over next moment in the dust, but Pepe was uppermost, and almost before the by-standers were fully alive to what had occurred he jumped up and was running for his life across the Barrack Square.

This square is the main thoroughfare into the town, and must be traversed by all, whether landing at Waterport or coming by the main causeway from the Neutral Ground and Spain. It has two approaches, one through the main line of fortifications, used by all vehicles, the other across the Landport drawbridge and covered way, which is set apart for horsemen and foot passengers.

As it was now late, and gun-fire close at hand, both these lines of traffic were crowded with people—a motley throng of inhabitants, soldiers of the garrison, ladies in carriages, grooms leading horses in clothing back to their stables; and against this inward-pouring stream another strong current setting out-

wards of "aliens," Spaniards from the towns and villages hard by, who had been admitted to the fortress on day-permits, and who were bound to leave at sundown on pain of punishment or future permanent exclusion.

Pepe was soon swallowed up in the concourse. He was sharp-witted and active; on foot, moreover, and thus enabled to dodge in and out of the throng while his chief pursuers—Frank and Major Jeffries—being on horseback and considerate, moved more slowly for fear of riding people down.

It seemed not unlikely that the fugitive might escape altogether; but Frank wisely left Jeffries to follow up the stern-chase, and himself turned into Landport, meaning to head Pepe back when he should gain the ditch and the causeway leading to Bayside. Pepe had hoped to get to the boats, dozens of which lay handy, and gain a *salucha* far out in the Bay, where he might lie hidden till pursuit was over. But it being now sundown, the drummer of the Waterport guard had already sounded the "recall," the wharf was clear, and the gates were closed almost in his face. Disappointed here, Pepe had no alternative but to breast the ramp which sloped up from the main ditch. Before Jeffries emerged from the Chatham counter-guard Pepe had eluded this pursuer and was out of sight.

Now his chances seemed good. Could he but pass the Bayside barrier and gain the sheds upon the Bay shore, he might escape observation for the present, and during the night get off scot-free into Spain.

But for Frank he might have been successful. Out here, however, there was less crowd, and the advantage lay now with those in chase. Pepe was nearing the barrier, more hopeful at every stride, but behind him was Frank gaining on him fast. One last chance remained. Pepe stopped suddenly, and faced Frank, with his knife.

Had our hero been riding loosely, he might have overshot his mark. But for all his eagerness, he was firm in the saddle and had his horse well in hand. More; as he drew closer to his quarry he had shortened his hunting-crop ready for use, and with this he dealt Pepe a tremendous blow upon the head which brought him immediately to the ground.

Within an hour, Pepe was laid by the heels in jail. The sergeant he had wounded was at death's door, the woman also in a critical condition, and it was not unlikely that he would have to stand his trial at the next assizes upon the capital charge.

The same night Frank obtained permission to visit him in the police-cell. Pepe glared furiously at his captor, and seemed so eager for his blood that the police-sergeant left them alone together with extreme reluctance. But Pepe had no knife, and without a weapon he did not dare attack Frank.

"What demon possessed you, Pepe, this evening? Were you drunk with black wine or murderous aguardiente?"

"*A lo hecho pecho,*" growled Pepe; "I have made my bed, and I must lie upon it. What do you seek here? The past is past, and such it must remain in spite of all."

"I want to know the truth; give but a clew. Every hair casts a shadow, a hint will therefore suffice. You got into my stable last night?"

"*Con mil de a caballo!* By a thousand on horseback, it is a lie! I swear by all the saints in heaven that I never—"

"False oaths will not serve you. It is useless to hide the hand that threw the stone. I know you were there. Who sent you?"

Pepe shook his head sulkily.

"All the world treads upon a fallen leaf; I cannot defend myself."

"You know what will happen to you now? You are in the hands of the law. The law here is as hard as the Rock; when stone and jug meet, it's bad for the jug. You will probably be tried for murder, and the penalty is death."

"*Sí, señor,*" said Pepe, striving to be calm; "but the lamb dies as fast as the sheep. Death can only come to us once in this world. I care not." Then suddenly he exploded with a burst of passionate words—"And if I am to die, who, by the life of the Moors, will have brought me to it? But for you I should have escaped to-night. Why did you interfere? Who gave you a candle to hold at this funeral? Had you not done me injury enough already? You flogged me, whipped me as if I had been your hound, a mean thing fit to be crushed under your boot. You sent me out to starve, without character, without hope, bearing only in my heart the injury and insult you had heaped upon me. *Señor,* I hate you with my whole heart, and were I not safe here within four walls, never again to see the open life of the hills, I would swear to be revenged."

"Pepe, a barking dog is never a good biter. I am not afraid of your threats, nor do I bear you malice now you are down. You shall have my help if you will but confess the truth."

"Help! What help will serve me now?"

"You shall have an *abogado*, a lawyer to defend you. I will give your mother money enough to make her comfortable for the rest of her life."

"How much, *señor?*"

"Two hundred dollars—three—five."

"I would not take five millions. What I have done is my own affair."

"Had you no accomplices?"

"Whom do you suspect?" said Pepe, looking keenly at him,

in hopes perhaps of giving some fresh stab by implanting in Frank's heart suspicion of his best friends.

"No matter, Were you quite alone? Did no one prompt you to this evil deed?"

"Perhaps. You have more enemies than me, and the friends in whom you have trusted they too despise and hate you."

"Which?" cried Frank, eagerly.

Had Bellota sought by underhand means to wreak this poor revenge upon his granddaughter's lover? or was Sproule, as Frank suspected, the real culprit.

"Which?" he repeated.

But Pepe kept silence, doggedly replying only at length:

"Find out! I did not do it. Would that I had or could, if it would give you but one shiver of pain. I should like to drink your heart's blood, Señor Don Francisco, and give your body to be eaten by dogs."

The undying hatred which possessed him was evident in his evil eyes and in the frantic writhings of his manacled hands. To argue with a man thus frenzied was sheer waste of time. Frank left the cell, and with heavy heart returned to his quarters, still uncertain what he should do. Although he longed to bring home to Sproule the proofs of complicity with Pepe, he saw that it would be idle to merely enunciate the charge and no more.

Still the case looked ugly, and it cost him a considerable effort to meet the Sproules next day just as if nothing had happened. While he was with them he fancied that the lady was ill at ease, and that Sproule, under cover of much boisterous *bonhomie*, was eyeing him warily, as if preparing to parry an unexpected blow. Such relations as these could not have continued long without serious misunderstanding, but in the midst of it all Frank was imperatively called to return to England.

In the first place, a crisis had come in his affairs. On top of former indebtedness came his heavy losses in the race, and a very large sum would now be required to put him straight. It was with a failing heart that he summed up the total; and now, for the first time in his life, felt afraid to face Sir Hector. He was very doubtful how any appeal for assistance would be received. The old gentleman's letters had grown colder in tone, and more rare than of old. Mr. Pownceby, Sir Hector's man of business, had hinted pretty plainly to Frank that he was no longer supreme favorite; his foolish attachment for Lola had done much to shake him in his uncle's affections. Frank declared to himself that he would never truckle to keep any man in good-humor, but he had enough worldly wisdom to recollect that he was quite at Sir Hector's mercy. Nor could he forget

past kindness; a quarrel with his great benefactor, really he would regret more deeply than the loss of more substantial advantages. As a rule, he had hitherto found, that in any difficulty with Sir Hector, a personal appeal was far more efficacious than long correspondence; and therefore he knew that now his better course would be to take home his unsatisfactory budget and lay it before Sir Hector himself.

A second and more urgent call to England was that now at length he had heard of Lola. He had never quite relinquished a hope that she might write to him. As the days passed on and no letter arrived, he grew rather despondent, but less from want of confidence in his love than from the conviction that she must indeed be closely guarded, or she would not have failed to communicate with him.

Lola had written to him, as we know, and was for many weeks in wonder and suspense at receiving no reply.

The delivery of letters on out-stations in Her Majesty's regiments is usually intrusted to one of the non-commissioned officers—in nine cases out of ten to the drum or bugle-major. This functionary is more skilled in the roulades and flourishes of the instruments over which he presides, than in deciphering strange fists. He may be an expert in the left-hand "paradiddle" or the right-hand "flam," but he is not therefore entitled to employment in the Blind department of Her Majesty's Post-office. To confess the truth, the address which Lola had put upon her letter to Frank puzzled Drum-major Dunkley most confoundedly. It was

*Sr Teniente,
Don Francisco Rotsli,
En el regim^{to} de S.M.B.,
No. _____
En la Plaza de
Gibraltar.*

This might have been as easy as A B C to a Spanish official, but to Dunkley it was no more intelligible than the Moabite Stone.

"It's for some one who's sick," he said. "A 'sore tenant!' of the hospital it'll be;" and thither he went at once with the letter.

But there was no patient who answered to the name of Tenant. From the hospital Dunkley went to the orderly-room, and declared himself unable to find a single soul in the whole corps who cared to have the letter. Whereupon the regimental books were searched through and through, but no name ap-

proaching "Sore Tennant" could be traced therein. It might be for some recruit expected in the next draft; it might be a joke, a valentine, or a dun trying a new dodge to win attention to his little account. For a month or two, or more, the poor little letter lay neglected amid a heap of old papers on the clerk's desk. Then one day it was given out to Dunkley to be returned to the post-office.

"Not known," said the drum-major. "Ain't got no such name as Tennant in the corps."

"But this letter," said the issuer at the post-office, "is for no one of that name. *Sr teniente* is only the title—the rank."

"And what rank might a ten-enty be?" asked Dunkley, catching at the sound.

"A lieutenant."

"Then a twenty-enty will be a captain, I suppose? And how many thousand-enties would make a colonel or a major-general?"

This discussion might have been prolonged indefinitely, but the clerk thought he was being chaffed, and this, being half a Spaniard, he greatly disliked.

"You'd better get a table of weights and measures," he said, half closing the window. "But that letter's for one of your officers, and you'd better find him."

"But which is his name?"

"There, at the 'Don,' it begins—Don Francisco—"

"I tell you we've no *dons* in our corps."

"Rotsli, man, that's the name. I can't waste time any longer. Rotsli!" and with the sound came to Drum-major Dunkley a solution of the whole mystery.

Thus at length was Frank made aware of what had happened to Lola since they parted two months before. This tender letter, interspersed with soft Spanish words of loving endearment—of *queridito*, *alma mia*, *amado de mi corazon*, and such like—brought back with tremendous reality the image of the beautiful child to whom he had given his heart. Never, indeed, had he faltered in his devotion, but now love promised to pass all bounds. Nothing should keep him longer from her side. He would start for England next mail and hasten to Fairfax. No obstacle should hinder this impetuous young gentleman from making Lola his own.

With his usual energy and decision, he triumphed over all the obstacles that retarded his departure. His debts were heavy and his creditors clamorous, but he sold most of his stud—Sproule bought the Bat—and raised money by giving promissory notes, and a bond upon the value of his commission. A more serious obstacle was Pepe's approaching trial, which Frank had

been subpoenaed to attend. But he was not really wanted; dozens of other people had witnessed the murderous assault, and the sergeant was himself so far recovered as to be able to appear in court. So the attorney-general excused Frank, and the last difficulty was removed. In a day or two Frank embarked for England.

On the voyage home his impatience knew no bounds. The passage was unusually rapid, and yet it seemed to him interminable. He found fault with the captain for delaying to take a pilot on board, and fumed at the leisurely movements of the custom-house officials. He traveled up to town with the mail-agent in the post-office van; yet, when he reached Euston, he found himself too late for the last train to Glimpsbury. He must have a special, he said. "Can't you wait till next morning?" they asked him. Certainly not; he must get on at once. It was inconvenient to send a special; so at last he compromised matters by accepting a seat on the engine of a goods-train, and was landed at Stafford a little after dawn, with his eyes full of coal dust and little short of sleep.

Early in the forenoon he reached Glimpsbury, where he halted to breakfast and refresh himself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOUJOURS PACO.

FRANK having resolved to go straight to Fairfax Manor, ordered a dog-cart and was driven over, reaching the house a little after noon.

He alighted at the front, and encountering Mr. Houps, who had come out in answer to the bell, asked if Lady Marion Fairfax was at home. He had gathered from what Lola had written that she of the three sisters would be the one most likely to befriend him, and had decided to open his heart to her alone.

"Lady Marion? 'Ev you come upon business, sir? Because if so, my Lady Henriette sees to all that, and she 've left for the metropolis."

"I have come on business of importance, but it is with Lady Marion Fairfax. Kindly take in my card and say so."

Houps was a little disturbed in his mind. This was a gentleman, evidently, but no one he recognized, and he thought that he knew most of the young gentlemen who had any right to call at Fairfax Manor. And was this visitor to be admitted or left standing at the door?

"Come, my friend," said Frank, rather peremptorily, "don't look at me as if I were one of the swell-mob."

Houps blushed at this rapid detection of his inmost thoughts.

"Take in my card, that will do; I'll wait outside. You may shut the door, if you like, and put the chain up."

Lady Marion was alone.

"Ev you please, m'lady, a gentleman—a young gentleman—a youth's called."

"Yes? Is that his card? Did you tell him that Lady Henriette had gone to London?"

"Ev you please, m'lady, he inquired for your ladyship."

"For me? Mr. Francis Wriottesley of the Royal Halberdiers! I never heard the name before in all my life. What have you done with him?"

"He is at the door, m'lady."

"Does he look like a gentleman?"

"Puffick! He did ast me if I thought he was after plate, and told me to put the chain up; but that was only his fun. His manners, m'lady, is quite correct."

"I'll see him," said Lady Marion, rather amused. "Show him into the morning-room; and—you'd better stand as near as you conveniently can, in case I want assistance;" a remark which Lady Marion knew would have the effect of keeping little Mr. Houps at a distance from danger and the key-hole.

"You asked for me," she said to Frank, bowing rather stiffly.

"May I inquire what has gained me the honor of this visit?"

"O Lady Marion! I know it must seem strange—"

"Very strange!"

"But I only landed last night from Gibraltar."

"Indeed! You will pardon me, but I fail to see why that is any excuse for your coming out to Fairfax this morning."

"There is a young lady staying here."

"Is there?"

"Surely there is—Miss Bellota?"

"If you had said you had come from Scotland Yard instead of Gibraltar, I should have been less surprised. Pray, what can you have to do with Miss Bellota, young sir?"

The moment Frank had mentioned Gibraltar, a light had broken in on Lady Marion; but she did not choose to admit all at once that she had fathomed the secret of this mysterious visit.

"Please tell me, pray do,—is she not here?"

"Miss Bellota?—with whose name you appear to have become acquainted by some strange means. No, Miss Bellota is not here."

"Not here?" blurted out Frank, springing from his chair.

"Why, Lola herself wrote to me and said—not here! Can I have made some terrible mistake?"

Lady Marion looked at him very hard, but did not utter a

sound. She was mentally examining him. A frank, gallant young fellow he certainly seemed, as open as his own bright face; honest, doubtless, as the day.

"You are *Paco*, I presume?" Lady Marion said at length, quite suddenly, and with a smile she could not repress.

"*Paco!* Yes! that is her name for me. Lola calls me *Pa*. She has told you then of me? But pray, Lady Marion, explain.

"Miss Bellota left this last week. My sister has taken her to London for the season."

What a miserable game of hide and seek it was!

"Are you going to London too?" asked Lady Marion, seeing Frank take up his hat and move towards the door.

"Yes," he replied, quite simply. "Will you kindly inform me where I am likely to meet with Lola?"

"Indeed, Mr. Wriottesley, I must do nothing of the kind. I should be very greatly to blame if I did."

"Are you really in earnest, Lady Marion?"

"Seriously, I am."

"Then I shall find her out by myself," cried Frank.

Lady Marion smiled.

"If you can. London is a large place."

"Nothing shall hinder me. I am determined to bring matters to a crisis. I must and will find Lola. It is quite absurd to think of preventing me. I shall seek her out, and I shall feel justified in making use of every available means."

"Detectives?"

"I shall be the best detective myself. Difficulties of an ordinary kind never stop me, Lady Marion, when I have made up my mind."

Frank would have taken Lady Henriette's breath away. Lady Marion was simply more and more amused.

"I came down here on the engine of a goods train."

"Very uncomfortable mode of traveling. Why not go in a carriage?"

"There was no train."

Lady Marion laughed outright.

"Upon my word, Mr. Wriottesley, you deserve to succeed." Then feeling she had said too much, she added:

"But you must expect no help from me."

"Please do not say that—you have been so kind to her—she has told me. Surely you will not refuse us, will you? We are so miserable."

Frank's jolly face did not look at all miserable, and Lady Marion said so.

"You will survive it. But Mr. Wriottesley, really I think I ought to have a little serious conversation with you. Will you tell me first how you excuse your coming here at all?"

"I know it was an impertinence. But the end, I hope, justifies the means."

"You learned those Jesuitical arguments abroad, I apprehend. Speak out, Mr. Wriottesley, and tell me, have you even Mr. Bellota's permission to pay your addresses to his granddaughter?"

"No, not exactly."

"Be honest. Do not stoop to prevarication. Are you not quite certain that he is most distinctly opposed to your suit?"

"I admit it."

"Yet you have had the—pardon me—effrontery to attempt to force your acquaintance upon us, and would make us parties to your underhand proceedings?"

Frank hung his head.

"How do you suppose we could justify ourselves to Mr. Bellota if we encouraged your visits, if we allowed you to have opportunities of continuing your attentions?"

Frank was still silent.

"You are obliged to admit the force of my arguments. I see that. You can offer no excuse for your conduct."

"None, except that I love her, and I know she loves me."

"A perfectly preposterous apology, Mr. Wriottesley. You know I cannot accept it."

"Everything is at cross purposes," cried Frank, passionately. "It seems as if we had not one friend in the world."

From the first Lady Marion had been well disposed towards him, and now his distress quite touched her.

"I presume Mr. Bellota had good reasons for withholding his consent?"

"None that I can call valid. He professes to hate all men of my cloth, and has sworn that Lola shall never marry one. Years ago an English officer did him a grievous wrong—"

"Go on," interposed Lady Marion, rather hastily.

"And the blame now recoils on innocent heads."

It was Lady Marion's turn to hang her head. George Fairfax! George Fairfax! he it was whose sin was bearing this bitter fruit. Frank had inadvertently secured Lady Marion as an ally forever.

"Are you in a position to marry?" she asked.

"I was; I can hardly say I am. My own friends have also turned against me. By some strange means my uncle, my only relative, has heard evil of my darling girl, and threatens to disinherit me unless I give her up. But I do not care; nothing whatever shall induce me to surrender my affection for Lola."

"I am not sure that, if I told you where my sister was to be found, it would materially advance your views. Henriette is a person of strong likes and dislikes, and at present she loaths your very name."

"Why, what have I done?"

"Your name is *Paco*; that is quite sufficient. I cannot tell you how unpopular '*Paco*' has been with us. You see, Mr. Wriottesley, we had never met you, and you must forgive us if we were prejudiced in your disfavor. Dolores is, for reasons I need not detail, very dear to us, and we are most anxious to secure her happiness. We scarcely thought to do that by encouraging such an unsuitable lover as the unknown Mr. *Paco*. My sister is especially bitter with you because you have so entirely occupied the girl's thoughts."

Sweet words these for a lover to hear. Frank longed more than ever to clasp his Lola to his heart.

"Still, Lady Marion, tell me where they are. I may perhaps overcome Lady Henriette as—"

"You have me? Upon my word, Mr. Wriottesley, you take too much for granted. Do not flatter yourself that you have conquered me. Perhaps I shall not help you at all."

"Not after you have raised my hopes so high? That would be cruel indeed. Surely you will not disappoint me now?"

"Well, I will not. I cannot find it in my heart to refuse. My sister has a house in Hill Street, Berkeley Square. They will be there for the next two months at least, perhaps more."

Frank got up at once, as if the house were in the next street.

"You will stay to lunch? There is no train till late in the afternoon. You cannot possibly go to Hill Street till to-morrow, and even then you may not see my sister."

"Won't I!"

"She'll say she is 'not at home' to you."

"Leave it to me: if worst comes to worst, I'll get into the house in disguise as the milkman, or a young man from Garrard's with a hamper of diamonds sent by the Queen of Spain."

Lady Henriette and her young charge were enjoying themselves thoroughly in London. To Lola, this first experience of the bright and fashionable season was much as if she had hitherto been a chrysalis, and had awakened all at once to the use of her wings. And yet the existence that seemed so glorious to our heroine would have been tame enough to the average London belle. One or two balls a week were all that Lady Henriette considered good for Lola.

The morning began late; between one and two she rode in the Park with Glimpshire friends and Fairfax cousins; after that the usual lunch, followed by shopping, sight-seeing, park, afternoon teas, sometimes to the opera or to a play, now and again to a dinner-party or a ball. It was all so new, so bright—nice dresses in plenty, nice people for companions, nice weather.

Every hour Gibraltar seemed farther and farther away; every hour the image of Frank Wriottesley was in danger of being covered up and lost in the thick rising mist of new sensations. Francisco, *Paco*—poor *Paco*! So lonely doubtless and so sad! Yet she never forgot him when she told her beads at night.

Lady Henriette was overjoyed to find Lola pleased with her visit to London. It delighted her to see this splendid bud opening its beautiful petals to the joyous air, and she loved to notice the admiration that our heroine elicited on every side. Beyond doubt Lola was the great success of the season. There was something so strikingly fresh in her style of beauty that she attracted attention wherever she went, even amid a crowd of English girls, whose fairer graces acted as a foil to enhance her own. Her grand eyes, brilliant cheeks, and extraordinarily graceful figure were beyond competition. And so this year the Spanish beauty was on every tongue; people stopped to stare at her in the Row; when she appeared at the opera, every lorgnette was turned upon the Fairfax box. Medlicott, the fashionable Academician, whose reputation was far in excess of his deserts, did her the compliment to ask her to sit to him.

She turned the heads of dozens of young men by the frank joyousness of her manner, by her merry laugh and teasing ways. Each one thought in turn that it was he that gave her such unmixed delight; and more than one impressionable youth took counsel with himself and with his friends whether he had any chance of success. Lola would have been shocked if any plain-spoken person had told her she was a flirt; and such indeed she was not. These men misunderstood her artlessness; they saw encouragement where she meant simply to be good-natured, and so they buzzed round her by the dozen, these gilded youths, with Lord Hawtayne at their head.

Meanwhile the first and last to whom she had given her heart had hastened to town, quite unconscious of the sensation his Lola was creating. Frank breakfasted at the Club alone, and for the rest of the forenoon tried to occupy himself in the library up-stairs. But the print seemed upside down, or he saw Lola in between the lines, surrounded by a chromatic edging, just as if he had been staring at the sun. He could wait no longer. These were not legitimate hours for paying a formal call, but his was not formal, and to Hill Street he must go without any longer delay. With springing step he issued forth, and wending his way through the busy streets, turned into Piccadilly, thence by Holy Hill and Berkeley Square to the house of which he had heard from Lady Marion.

"M'lady is hout," said the footman. "And Miss Bellota," he added to Frank's second inquiry.

"I've come on rather particular business," went on our hero, supplying the necessary tip. "I was at Fairfax Manor yesterday, and Lady Marion begged of me to call here to-day." (O Frank!) "Will you be good enough to say Mr. Wriottesley called, and let Miss Dolores also know?"

He seemed so pat with all the names that the servant's confidence—warmed a little doubtless by the genial friction of coin upon his palm—burst into full bloom.

"M'lady's sure to be back within an hour, sir. Lunch is at two. Miss Bellota's riding in the Park, sir."

So Frank hastened to the Row. He was eager to get a glimpse of Lola, even if he could not speak to her.

It is an amusing experience to return to London after a long absence, and, if it be the gay season, to wend one's way at once to the Park. Here they are at it still. The game might never have ceased for a moment; a motley shifting crowd busy upon the social treadmill, moving on and on and round and round with all the regularity of clock-work; not quite the same people perhaps, though there are some whose life is perennial. "Found drowned" and "Sudden death" are always there; the madman, too, who sits on several chairs with a yellow bandana spread upon his knees; the seedy Frenchman with the battered hat, and the faded, aged woman, who walks quickly through the crowd, muttering curses on all whom she meets,—these never change, but others do. Not a few we left at it have got their order of release; some of the old beaux have been called away to the happy hunting-grounds; the maidens have galloped and ogled themselves into snug country homes; mammas have retired, sated with spoil of young men; the young men themselves have married or failed, or gaining some faint glimmer of sense as the years pass by, have discovered that to simper and swagger along the Dandies' Walk, or canter conceitedly up and down the Row, is not sufficient employment even for the youthful years of a man's life. But the places of all are filled; nature, even when unnatural, abhors a vacuum, and men may come and men may go, but the Park, during the summer, is certain to be as full as ever.

So Frank as he walked along encountered many a greeting. Although not exactly what is termed "a London man," part and parcel of the town as much as the Monument or the Marble Arch, he was yet sufficiently well known. There were not a few of his own cloth, for in the spring season soldiers have a standing garrison in town, and in such public haunts as the Park they appear regularly, and maneuver themselves with admirable precision, and very much to their own satisfaction, if not to that of the world at large. Besides these, Frank had that

large acquaintance among the young men of his day which is possessed by all who have been trained at college and public school. Some stopped to pass such a commonplace as "Not seen you lately? Heard you were dead!" and Frank took up their acquaintance just where he had left it long before, knowing well that it mattered little to them whether he lived or no.

But he was really pleased to meet cheery Jack Fortesque.

"Wriottesley! a sight for sore eyes. Been abroad? Soldiering? Good! But what brings you here? That's bad."

"There is no law passed against it yet, is there? If so, we shall be a merry party. Who's to be taken up first?"

"There'll be a law soon. Only low-class lot come to the Park now, except to ride. It's a chalk affair. Princes, that's the caper."

"What brings *you* then?"

"I want to fill my coach for Hurlingham this afternoon. I'm looking for some friends. Haven't seen 'em, have you?"

"Are you a friend to the whole human race? How should I know your friends when I see them?"

"Thought you might. Don't matter. Where do you hail from?"

"Gibraltar."

"Is that in Europe?"

"No; Africa."

"Get out! What lingo do they talk there?"

"Rock scorpion."

"Never heard of it."

"It's a mixture of Arabic, Hebrew, English, slang, and Spanish."

"I wish I could talk Spanish. Can you?"

"Yes."

"What's the Spanish for 'my dearest girl'?"

"Are you 'on' with a Spaniard?"

"I am; so's everybody this year—at least everybody from Glimpshire—Hawtayne, too, and he's the best *parti* of the season."

"What's she like?"

"Judge for yourself. There she goes. I want to settle with her. She was to come this afternoon if Lady Henriette agrees."

It was Lola herself, cantering gayly along, straight-backed and fearless as any English girl. She was in high glee, laughing and turning her bright face towards Lord Hawtayne, as if she drank in with delight his every word.

A pang shot through Frank's heart. Had she forgotten him already? Had this introduction to a brighter world turned her head and changed her nature altogether? Had she then lost

her truthfulness and honesty? forgotten her vows of constancy, her pretty, passionate promises of unswerving devotion? Impossible! Yet Frank could not but doubt a little, and it was with far less buoyancy of spirit that he returned to Hill Street. At his first visit he might have been a victorious general entering a captured province; now he was downcast and with hanging head, like a child expecting to be whipped.

"M'lady's at home, sir, and hopes you'll stay to lunch," the footman said. "I told her you had called, and she begged me to ask, in case she did not see you again, whether your father and mother were both well and had come up to town."

Clearly Lady Henriette mistook him for somebody else. Luck favored him, and Frank, making the most of the mistake, followed the footman promptly up-stairs, wondering what he should say to Lady Henriette.

Fortunately the drawing-room was empty, and the next person to enter it was Lola herself, in riding-habit, just as she had dismounted from her horse.

"A gentleman up-stairs? Come to lunch?" She went slowly up step by step, trying to guess which man it was of the many it might be. Then turning the handle of the door she found herself face to face with—*Paco!*

A half-scream of delight escaped her, and she rushed forward only to halt next instant, irresolute. If this were her lover really alive in the flesh, why did he stand so coldly there, making no sign, without even a word of greeting?

"You have then forgotten me, Lola," said Frank, gravely, speaking in Spanish.

"O *Paco!*"

"*A muertos y a idos no hay amigos.* The dead and those gone away have no friends."

"Why such unkind words? Do not look like that, *Paco*; you have no cause to distrust me. Never once have you been absent from my thoughts, sleeping or waking. I have prayed for you day and night, prayed to the Holy Virgin Mother that we might live both of us till the time come for us to meet again. And now at length it is here and you question me with cruel doubts and unkind words. O *Paco!*"

Her lips quivered and her eyes filled with tears; but with a strong effort she mastered her grief and stood proudly up as if daring him to disprove her words.

But he was more than satisfied now. The next moment she was in his arms, and he was begging her forgiveness with a thousand loving words.

The reader will readily understand that it was more than a surprise to Lady Henriette to find, when she entered the room, a

strange man kissing Lola and calling her "his precious darling." She was in doubt at first whether she saw a vision, next whether she should send for a policeman.

"Who and what are you?" she cried, with flashing eyes, red face, and a voice raised unusually high. "How dare you, sir? How dare you?"

For a moment both stood shamefaced and speechless. Lola recovered herself first, and raising her head defiantly, said as calmly as she was able:

"This is *Paco*—my lover. Lady Henriette, let me present him to you."

"Then I must request Mr. *Paco* instantly to leave this house," replied Lady Henriette, very shortly and snappishly.

"If he goes like this, I go with him," Lola said, quickly, with rising color.

"Heavens above, child, you must be mad!"

The catastrophe was as sudden as when a ship in fair weather strikes a sunken rock and falls all to pieces. It seemed to Lady Henriette as if in a moment Lola had been transformed into another creature, and all the newly-learned lessons melted into thin air. And yet she had sufficient knowledge of our heroine's quality to avoid all immediate expostulation. But what was she to do? This man could not be suffered to remain; yet if she drove him away, Lola was madcap enough to carry out her threat of following him. And if the girl chose to go, what was to prevent her? Lady Henriette shuddered when she remembered that she had really no hold over her headstrong charge, and a short of telegraphing to Don Mariano, could hardly use any means of coercion. Anything was better than driving Lola into some rash act. And in her perplexity, Lady Henriette, with the wisdom born of desperation, took the only prudent course—she appealed to Frank himself.

"You are a gentleman?"

"I trust I am."

"Then I shall not be wrong, I hope, in expecting that you will leave this house, to which—pardon my saying it—you came uninvited, and that you will leave it directly."

Lola took a short step towards Frank as if to range herself on his side.

"You see," went on Lady Henriette, "this infatuated girl is ready to go any lengths. How shall you be able to forgive yourself, by and by, if you encourage her?"

A hot blush overspread our heroine's cheek. She understood plainly enough the meaning of Lady Henriette's words; she was sensible that her attitude was unmaidenly, yet how could she part with *Paco* just when he had come back to her?

Nor was Frank less perplexed. His heart had gone out to his love, and he yearned to carry her off and keep her in spite of all the world. But Lady Henriette's appeal touched him. It was his duty to protect Lola even from herself. Had she said to him, "Frank, do not desert me," his resolution might have failed him. But she could speak no words to keep him by her side. She felt that if he elected to go, go he must, for all that she could say. Whether she expected him to be more persistent, I know not, but it was with a sharp pang that she heard him say:

"Your ladyship is right; I will go at once."

And Lola allowed him to leave the room without daring to raise her eyes from the floor.

Lady Henriette, as if to make assurance doubly sure, accompanied Frank down-stairs. But no sooner were they alone than he began once more to plead his cause.

"Will you not allow me to explain? If I might only call again; only once—"

"No, no, certainly not; you must never call again. If you persist in forcing yourself here and giving us annoyance, I must seek the protection of the police."

At which Frank laughed in spite of his perturbation.

"Go away, sir, go away;" which Frank did very obediently, looking only to the landing above to see if his Lola had come out to see the end of the row.

Then as the door closed upon him, Lady Henriette turned to the footman and said:

"Remember, Giles, that gentleman never again enters this house. Whenever he calls, we are not at home."

CHAPTER XXV.

MUST I REALLY GO?

"DOLORRES," said Lady Henriette on her return, "I hope you are properly ashamed of yourself."

"And why? Is he not my *novio*?"

"Do, pray, speak English." Whenever Lola had recourse to her native tongue it meant mischief. "What I wish to ask is, whether you mean to do this sort of thing again? Whether you consider it right and proper?"

"And I ask you, señora, to tell me in what have I been to blame. It was most natural surely?"

"Natural! If you are really so indifferent to all the proprieties of life, I must give you up. Making appointments, here, with young men!"

Lola fired up directly.

"*Mentira!*—it is a lie."

The word has not quite so harsh a sound in Spanish as in English, but whether softened down by Castilian accent or translated into its vulgar Saxon equivalent, there could be no excuse for Lola.

Lady Henriette grew nearly white; it might have been with rage but there was terror also in her look. There was every prospect now of a battle little less bloody than that first engagement at Fairfax Manor.

"I cannot listen to such awful language. It's positively fiendish."

"*Mentira! mentira! mentira!*" repeated Lola again and again, spitting out the syllables with a hissing sound.

"I declare you make my blood run cold. But I must and will ask—did you or did you not ask this man to come to the house?"

"No, Lady Henriette, I did not. *En mi vida*, never in all my life have I done so. Those who would woo me must come in pursuit; I do not send for them."

Lady Henriette looked puzzled.

"You do not believe me of course. *Bien!* To me it is equal. I do not care."

And then followed a lull. To speak the plain truth, Lady Henriette was in an awkward predicament. She could not be harsh with Lola; she had come to love the girl as her own child. So much the more reason why she should not give way. It was manifestly her duty to keep Lola and her unsuitable lover apart. How otherwise could they acquit themselves in the trust which Mr. Bellota had reposed in them? But how was Lola to be won from her obstinate waywardness? Not by force. This was plain, and if further proof were needed, it might be found in our heroine's defiant attitude as she stood up straight before her, with head thrown back and little hands clenched tightly over her riding-whip—a very charming picture of concentrated determination. But Lola had shown herself always peculiarly sensitive to kindness. A soft word would do more with her than the most violent harangue. Remembering this, Lady Henriette, changed her tactics.

"Lunch is waiting, my child," she said, very mildly; "we will talk about all this at some other time."

"I do not want lunch." Lola was pouting.

"You know we are to go to Hurlingham this afternoon. You will enjoy the drive."

"I can go nowhere to-day," said Lola, shaking her head very vigorously.

"Mr. Fortescue will be so much disappointed."

"I hate Mr. Fortescue."

Truly Lady Henriette was exhibiting the temper of an angel.

"And me, and Marion, and all the world except this—"

"Oh, how miserable I am! I wish I were dead!" cried Lola, piteously breaking down all at once. Her eyes were brimming over with tears, and her whole frame shook as she fell, with a wild passion of grief into the wide, kindly arms so readily offered her.

"I was wrong—I know I was wrong. I should not have spoken like that," Lola sobbed out by and by, and Lady Henriette answered only by smoothing her hair and patting her soft cheek. Here was victory easily achieved; but like other cheap-bought affairs, it contained within itself the elements of future defeat.

"O Lady Henriette! you are so good and kind—you will not go against him, will you—not always?"

This was an insidious counter-attack. But Lady Henriette in the utter collapse of her antagonist felt that she could be magnanimous. Besides, she was softened, and therefore off her guard.

"No," she said, but reluctantly. "Not always, perhaps. It will depend."

"He is my first, my only love. He saved my life once" (artful exaggeration), "and that of my grandfather. Ought I not to love him?"

But Lady Henriette saw her imprudence, and would be enticed no further. One more admission and the victory would be with Lola and not with her.

"Some day you shall tell me all about it," she said, evasively. "Now will you take your habit off first, or come to lunch at once?"

Thus for the moment the great question remained in abeyance, but it was not solved. Lady Henriette fondly hoped that by banishing Frank altogether from her house she had cut from him all chance of meeting Lola again. In this she was greatly mistaken. Being a stranger in London seasons for some years past, she was but scantily informed of facts which designing mothers had at their fingers' ends. She was quite unaware that a certain Mr. Wriottesley was *bien vu* in really good society, looked on as an excellent *parti*, and meeting everywhere the worship accorded to such fortunate persons by many disinterested members of the opposite sex. He had but to let it be known that he had returned to England, and to renew his acquaintance with certain fashionable dames, to be admitted once more into many of the best houses in town. This he prepared

to do, hoping ere long to meet Lola again amid the gayeties of the great world.

That very afternoon he went to Hurlingham, for he remembered Jack Fortescue had said that Lola was to be there.

He walked round once or twice, bowing and nodding to friends, but without pausing in his search, till he came to the coach he sought. There was Lola mounted upon the box. She caught sight of him almost as soon as he saw her, and sent up at once a signal of recognition to her cheek in a flaming blush. He took off his hat, and she nodded in return a little short nod, and waved her hand in that peculiar horizontal fashion which Spanish ladies adopt when recognizing their acquaintances.

"Who was that?" asked Lady Henriette from behind. She had her glass up quickly, but she was very short-sighted, and now she was too late to see Frank.

"Some one."

"I did not suppose you bowed to the air," said Lady Henriette, rather huffed. "Was it any one I know?"

"You might, but you won't."

"Gracious, child, don't talk in parables. Please tell me who it was."

"Paco, then."

The shot went straight to the mark.

"Dolores, I think we ought to be going back to town," said Lady Henriette, uneasily. She had no wish for a scene, and short of that did not see how to prevent Lola from speaking to Frank if they came together.

"Mr. Fortescue, shall you stay to the end? are not all the poor birds killed yet?"

"Oh, please do not go," cried Lola. "I like this."

"It reminds you of a bull-fight, I presume," said her ladyship, meaning to be severe.

"I hate them. I never was at more than one, and then I fainted. Paco carried me out—"

Paco again! But indeed it was to be *Paco* again and again till it seemed to Lady Henriette that the whole town of London contained this man and no other. For Frank pursued them everywhere. He had bought over the footman in Hill Street, and through him heard exactly what invitations reached the ladies, and of their other engagements. In this way he managed to haunt Lola like a shadow. He seldom came near enough to speak except now and then for a moment or two in the Park; but he cropped up wherever Lola set foot, as unfailingly as a weed in poor soil. Lady Henriette, being so short-sighted, had never yet succeeded in recognizing him. In their short interview at Hill Street she had been too much agitated to

take close note of his appearance; but she heard his name now often enough. Whenever she saw Lola speaking or bowing to a stranger, she invariably asked his name. The answer never varied: "That?—*Paco*." "The one I shook hands with?—*Paco*." It was *Paco* here, *Paco* there, till Lady Henriette, beginning by being bewildered, ended by being seriously annoyed.

Meanwhile Lola, mischievous girl, regaining her good-humor, laughed in her sleeve and enjoyed the joke amazingly. And it was more than half a joke after all. For Lola had not failed to detect Lady Henriette's sensitiveness on the subject, and, with her innate love of fun, invented occasions for recognizing and smiling graciously at Frank when he was really nowhere within miles.

This rather amusing game continued for some little time. Chance at last brought matters to a crisis.

Frank was engaged to dine at a house in Princes' Gate, and on arrival the hostess met him with a smile.

"So glad we have managed to catch you, Mr. Wriottesley."

He might have been a cricket-ball or an evasive butterfly.

"We have the Spanish beauty dining with us; and as you have just returned from Spain, I think—"

Whereupon Frank was taken up and formally introduced to Lola—a ceremony which was performed with admirable gravity on both sides.

"Who is that young man who has taken in Dolores to dinner?" asked Lady Henriette from the far end of the table, where she sat in state by the side of the host. She had scanned him carefully through her glass, but could not put a name to him. But she was suspicious, and inquired at once.

"A Mr. Wriottesley." The name properly pronounced, gave her no clew. It clearly was not *Paco*—that forward young gentleman who had made a forcible entry into the house in Hill Street.

"They seem to get on very well together."

"He has just returned from Spain, and is speaking to her probably in her own language."

Yes; in the language sweetest to lovers' ears, whether it be Spanish, English, or High Dutch. This was the first time they had an opportunity for unrestricted conversation since they had parted at Gibraltar ages before. It was a most delightful *tête-à-tête* ; they were alone in a crowd; their tender words were in a tongue unknown to any who caught their sound.

"*Estrellita* / little star," began Frank, "this time the luck is on our side."

"I thought, *Paco*, we should never meet to speak together again. To be so near often and yet these miles apart."

"We are near enough now," cried Frank, rashly trying to take her hand.

"*Dios mio!* are you mad, *hijo?* Remember we are not alone here; see from the far end Lady Henriette eyes us with her glasses. I shall have to pay for this."

"If she only were to see, I would kiss you before her face."

"*Calla, loco.* (Be quiet, lunatic.)"

"I am *loco*, yes, mad, but with happiness, Lola. Lolita of my soul, I love you more than ever."

"Such language in public!"

"They cannot understand a word."

"Some one might; be prudent, *Paco*; consider, the time is short; after this we may never meet again. You have much to tell me. Your uncle, what did he say?"

Frank hardly knew how to answer. Lola had declared she would never marry him without his uncle's approval, and if he confessed the truth she would doubtless be firm in her decision.

"Ah! I see. Do not seek to hide it, *Paco*. He will not hear of the match."

"Some one has played me an evil turn; has told him untruths about you, darling—untruths which must assuredly fail in their object as soon as he has seen you himself. He does not guess that my Lola is a queen, one who has all the world at her feet. I am going to him; he shall come to town and judge for himself. I will bring him to the Park or wherever you prefer, and I promise that you make him too an easy prey."

"Flattering words, *hijo*; but words and no more. What if I distrust them, and still refuse to become your wife without his consent?"

"You cannot refuse—at least, not forever. He must—he will—I know he will give in the moment he has seen you, Lola. You are so changed, so much improved."

"Thank you for the favor, señor *mio*. When you courted me at first I was then not so perfect as you could wish? Truly you are a plain-spoken youth, and presume not a little on our friendship."

"Do not pout, Lola; do not misunderstand me. To me you could not be better or a brighter beauty than on that first evening at the fair. But do you think that outwardly you are the same person now as then? Does not the bud grow into the blossom, the green kernel into the ripe fruit? You were beautiful then, and captivating now. You are quite irresistible."

"That is better, *Paco*. I am a woman, and I can swallow praises—from you—as fast as a donkey thistles."

"'Cuando te veo in saya verde
Quisiera ser boricua para comerte.'"

I should like to be a donkey," said Frank, laughing and quoting a well-known couplet, "to eat you whenever you wear a green dress. But let's be serious, Lola. Give me a plain answer? Yes or no?"

"I know not what to say, *Paco*. I had thought long ago at Gibraltar that I could be firm, that nothing should persuade me to be the cause of injury to you. Since then—since we have been parted—I have grown more selfish; I have thought more of myself. I suffered, *Paco*, so much at being away from your side that I could not endure to be separated forever."

"*Hija!* daughter, those are sweet words to hear. I think we two together, if we are but true, are strong enough to defy the world."

"Your love to me, my *Paco*, is like the sky—it covers all the world beneath."

This pretty talk lasted until the ladies left the room. Upstairs Lady Henriette found occasion to whisper to Lola:

"You had a pleasant neighbor, child?"

"Oh, yes." For the life of her she could not prevent a smile. "He has been in Spain—at Gibraltar, too, where he knew many people, even my grandfather."

"You must bring him to me by and by. I should like to know him."

Which Lola very demurely promised to do; giving Frank just a hint beforehand, as he came up after dinner, to be upon his guard, but to make himself as agreeable as he could.

Lady Henriette was very blind, and he was careful to take a seat with the light behind him, so that she might not too closely inspect his face. He was also most circumspect in his conversation. She was eager for authentic information about Gibraltar, sounding him as to the real position of Mr. Bellota, and plying him with questions he did not find it easy to answer. What was he to say, when she inquired if he had known any Mr. *Paco* there?

"*Paco* what? *Paco* is a Christian diminutive, Lady Henriette."

"No, is it? I did not know."

"It is short for Francis or Francisco, which is a common name enough in Spain. You must give me more particulars. He is a Spaniard, I presume?"

"I don't know. Perhaps."

"A brigand?"

"Or worse. He is very forward, and I am quite afraid of him."

"You have seen him then?"

"Yes; once, I regret to say."

"And would know him again?"

"Among a thousand."

"Indeed," thought Frank.

But as they were treading on dangerous ground, he made shift to talk about other things, chiefly of his travels in Southern Spain, and the manners and customs of the people among whom Lola had spent all her early years.

"I like that young man very much," Lady Henriette said to Lola, as they drove home. "Wriottesley? What Wriottesley I wonder? There were some down in Hampshire. Have you ever met him before?"

"Si (yes)." Lola spoke unusually soft and low.

"Before to-night? At balls? Where?"

"At Gibraltar."

There was not sufficient light to distinguish the flush upon her cheek, or Lady Henriette would not have needed to cross-examine further.

"But you never told me that child! Did your grandfather know him also?"

"A little; very little."

"Dolores, can it be possible? Have you led me into a trap, deceitful girl? Surely, surely, this is not that indefatigable wretch who has been pursuing us everywhere all over the town?"

Lola put up her hand to stop Lady Henriette's mouth, then put her arm round the old lady's neck and whispered gently in her ear the hated name of:

"Paco."

"And I have asked him to lunch to-morrow."

"No, no, not really?" cried Lola, clapping her hands with delight. "Ah, I knew you could not resist my *Paco*, not when you had found out what he was truly worth."

Nevertheless, Lady Henriette was somewhat chagrined at the turn which affairs had taken. At first she felt very angry with Lola, for having concealed the truth from her. Yet the meeting had been accidental; were the lovers to blame for trying to turn it to the best account? To think that she herself should have invited this man to enter the house she had positively declared should never be open to him! But he should *not* come to Hill Street; she would deny herself. This she stoutly maintained to herself for at least an hour that night; but next morning her views had changed. Looking at Lola's pleading face, she could not find it in her heart to deprive the child of the pleasure of meeting Frank again. He might come, this once; only they should have with her connivance or consent no opportunities for continuing their flirtation. Frank might visit at her house like

any other young man of her acquaintance, but not on any account as the accepted suitor of Dolores.

So Frank made his appearance at Hill Street again, and yet again. Each time he made further progress with Lady Henriette, and they became such fast friends that in the end she promised to intercede with Bellota to withdraw his opposition to the match.

These first days of their openly acknowledged engagement—for such even Lady Henriette was compelled to consider it—passed rapidly, and in the happiness they brought, Frank utterly forgot the mission on which he had returned to England—forgot that he had a captious uncle down in —shire ready to take offense at any fancied slight, forgot that there were enemies ready to supplant him in his uncle's favor, forgot that he was heavily indebted at Gibraltar, or that he had aught else to occupy his life but to bask in Lola's smiles.

Then as from a dream the lovers were suddenly awakened by a peremptory summons from old Bellota for the girl to return to Gibraltar. He thanked the kind ladies for their rich courtesy to his child; but he found that he could no longer exist without her who was the sole remnant of his own flesh and blood. He was aging fast, and in his loneliness was haunted with a dread that he might never see Dolores again. She must come back to him at once; he counted the hours until her return.

The news took both the ladies in Hill Street by surprise. It came upon Lady Henriette with a sort of reproach, as if she had failed in her sacred trust. In Lola it roused only rebellious feelings, and she was tempted to resist her grandfather's authority, feeling certain that in this she would be strenuously seconded by Frank.

"Oh, must I really go, Lady Henriette?" she asked with streaming eyes.

"Of course you must go. He is your nearest relative, and has undoubtedly the first claim. Besides, he says that he is ill."

"*Pfua!* I know what that means. He was ill at Cadiz, he said—unkind *abuelo*—and it was but a trick to get me away. I need not go now unless you send me off. You will not do that; you will not drive me forth when I would rather stay with you all, a thousand times? I have been so happy at Fairfax and with you."

Such pleading was difficult to resist, but Lady Henriette was firm.

"Let me stay a little longer."

"Of course I do not mean that you should start to-morrow, but next week at latest."

"And may I not go to Fairfax once again to bid adieu to all my kind friends?"

Anything to gain time; anything but a sudden severance from *Paco*.

"It is better not. There would hardly be time."

"I will *not* go!" cried Lola suddenly, stamping her foot.

"Do not make us more sad, Dolores. It is a little hard on us to lose you now, just as we have learned to love you so much. It is not our wish indeed to let you go—"

"Then I may stay! Good, kind lady, I love you for those words."

"Indeed you must not ask us. It would be wrong, quite wicked, to deny you to your proper guardian when he insists on your return."

"Your words are fair, señora, but you do not mean what you say. You are glad, glad to be rid of me. I have been a burden, an annoyance—"

"Dolores, pray do not accuse me so wrongfully. You will be sorry by and by."

But the girl had not waited to hear more. Quite overcome with this unexpected blow, she had hurried off to her own room to fling herself on the floor in a passion of grief.

By and by, when Frank as usual arrived, he found Lady Henriette down-stairs alone. Then, with quick beating heart, he heard his fate.

"But, Lady Henriette, need she go?"

"We could not keep her, we could not ask her to remain in the face of such a command as this. We have no right—none, at least, equal to that of her grandfather."

"But there is one right that would come before his—a husband's."

Lady Henriette stared at him with eyes wide open, and scarcely believing her ears. Did the man mean to run away with the girl before her very face?

"You know, Lady Henriette," went on Frank, without disguise, "what my sentiments are: you know that Lola returns my love, you know that her grandfather will never consent to our union—why then wait for it? Why need she return to Gibraltar at all except as my wife? Then perhaps we can gain the old man's forgiveness while we might wait in vain for his consent."

"Nay, nay, Mr. Wriottesley, do not propose anything so awful. I could not, indeed I could not, be a party to such a terrible proceeding. I should blame myself for the remainder of my life. Believe me, no happiness could come from such violent and improper measures."

"But there is no alternative," said Frank, doggedly.

"At least seek no assistance from me. I could not join in

anything so underhanded. Just conceive! Mr. Bellota intrusts his granddaughter to us, and we allow her to—O Mr. Wriottesley, give it one moment's consideration—would it be fair to us?

"No, Lady Henriette, I must admit that. But I thought that you too cared for Lola, and wished to spare her pain."

"And is this the way to plead, Mr. Wriottesley? I had hoped indeed that you would support me. Do not, I implore you, speak in these terms to Dolores. Do not suggest any such course. She is *l'le montle*, and might listen. Think of the harm that you would do her."

"O Lady Henriette, I am distracted; I cannot part with her. I should never, never see her again."

"Be brave, *Paco*, be brave as a man should be. Do that which is right. You, the stronger and the most experienced, should be the best able to judge. Can you not see that Dolores must return to her grandfather if he should wish it? Do not, for heaven's sake, suggest that she should remain. In her present condition I fear she would agree to almost any proposal you might make. It is for you to protect her against herself. If you are the gentleman I take you for, you cannot resist, I am sure."

"But it seems to be like surrendering all hope. It is hard to risk separation which may last, goodness only knows how long."

"It shall not last forever, I promise you, not if our intercession can avail. Mr. Bellota will surely listen to us. You shall have us on your side—promise, only promise to let her go."

And with a heavy heart Frank had to consent to Lola's departure.

Presently she herself came in with eyes red and swollen.

"You have heard, *Paco*?"

Lady Henriette was watching him, and he bowed his head unable to speak.

"And must I go, *Paco*?" Lola was suffering already from a sharp pang of disappointment, but why or wherefore she could not tell.

"I suppose so."

"And we shall never meet again?"

"Oh, pray, pray, *queridita de mi alma*, talk not in such a mournful strain—we *shall* meet again. Ay, and that without delay. I will follow you back to Gibraltar within a week, and then let your grandfather look well to his charge. I will win you, I swear, even in his very teeth."

CHAPTER XXVI.

BACK AT ROSIA.

“**B**E patient and brave, my soul's own. Within a week or two I will follow you, and then I swear nothing shall keep us apart.”

These were Frank's last words to Lola as they bade farewell on the steamship. They nerved her for this next meeting with her grandfather, to which she looked forward with lively dread. How would he receive her? If with eager affection she might perhaps forgive him for past treachery and rashness. After all, this terrible visit to England had proved far more enjoyable than she had believed possible. But if he were still unkind, still determined to forbid Frank's suit, then would she also be cold and reserved, speaking to him rarely, and if at all, only to upbraid him with his cruel treatment.

Bellota himself was even more uneasy at the prospect of our heroine's return. He could not defend, even to himself, the miserable trick he had played her; he could not blame her if she bore him a grudge. She would perhaps remember only his treachery, giving him no credit for his good intentions. For he still continued to persuade himself that it had been entirely for her good that she should be kept out of the way of this designing villain who had gained—Satan only knew how—such forcible hold upon her affections. A man more reasonable than Bellota would have been forced to qualify his distrust after hearing Frank's explicit offer of marriage, made openly as it was, and with unmistakable honesty of purpose. But Bellota could not have confidence in any one of the officer class. They were all alike. This one was doubtless a libertine like the rest, whose only desire was to heap disgrace upon poor Lola, and ruin her even as her hapless mother had been ruined.

So when the grandfather and grandchild stood before each other upon the deck of the “Malabar,” soon after she had dropped anchor in the Bay, both paused, half in interrogation, each waiting for the other to make the first advance. Lola saw that the old man had sensibly aged, and was more infirm than when she had parted from him; and as this conviction came upon her, it softened her heart towards him, and she remembered only the fondness of the old happy days, and not the one recent act of severity.

As for Don Mariano, he stopped short, almost doubting his eyes. Was this really the same little Lola who had left him only a few months before? She had gone a child, inexperienced,

unformed, possessing all the nameless graces of early girlhood, but still in his eyes merely a child, a tender bud, that had hardly begun to blossom. She came back with the air of a duchess. In this short interval she had grown into a woman—a tall dignified woman, with so much majesty of demeanor, so much self-possession, such an air of high-breeding, that Bellota realized that she was rapidly passing beyond his control.

Undoubtedly she had gained much in England, in the first place from her constant association with the Ladies Fairfax, following which came the best society in the great London world; while something was also due to the good offices of Mrs. Bridle, aided by the intelligent assistance of the milliners. The outcome of it all was this graceful well-dressed dame, whom Bellota scarce recognized as one of his own flesh and blood.

And then he prayed most devoutly that he might find her changed in disposition as well as in aspect. He hoped, almost against hope, that she had learned now to put a higher value upon herself, and would no longer cling so childishly to this first ill-advised attachment.

They kissed each other, and he said simply, "Welcome home, child of my heart! I rejoice to see you so stout and well."

For the present, then, no word of that which had passed. It was better so. Lola was relieved and glad. That which could not be remedied or undone had better be buried out of sight, and if possible forgotten.

"And you, *abuelo mio*?" asked Lola in a tone of tender solicitude that almost sent tears of joy into Bellota's eyes. "You have not been ailing, I trust? are you quite as hale and vigorous as of old?"

"In truth, no, Lola; but the sight of your sweet face gives me new life. Come, then; the boat is alongside; let José see to the luggage, and we will come on shore."

They landed at Waterport, crowded and busy; and as our heroine gazed upon the once familiar scene, now half-effaced by a host of new sensations, her heart was touched. The sights and sounds came back to her like dim memories of childhood, reminding her of happy days gone past recall. For a moment she seemed in a dream: all around her was so ghost-like and unreal. This moving, motley crowd, this Babel of tongues—all was so familiar and yet so strange.

This feeling grew upon her as she passed with her grandfather into the town. How small it was! Everything seemed shrunk to half its original size. The streets she remembered as wide imposing thoroughfares, were contracted now to narrow, tortuous lanes; the shops looked like pill-boxes, their contents

second-rate and mean. For carriages she saw nothing better than a tumble-down *calesa*, or a great lumbering ambulance drawn by commissariat mules. And the cottage, when they reached it, seemed quite a poky place, its furniture dingy, all the home comforts to which she had been of late accustomed either altogether wanting or on the poorest scale. The small house seemed as lonely as the chambers of her heart.

Yet as the days passed, Lola did her best to grow contented with her lot. But the change was so sudden and so complete. One week in the midst of all the bustle and excitement of a London season, the next buried alive in this quiet corner of the far-off Rock. Struggle as she might, she could not conceal from herself that she was miserable. She had left all her gayety behind her. There was an end to all her joyous doings, to the flower-shows, balls, rides in the Row, to all the brilliant *functions* which had made her recent life one continuous whirl of pleasure. Here, on the Rock, there were neither sights nor sounds. She might perhaps watch the flowers grow in the garden, or the clouds creep across the sky overhead—what else? She might listen to the blare of a distant bugle or the boom of the morning and evening gun—what more?

And she was much alone. Josefa, as we know, had disappeared, and the woman who had taken her place was a mere servant, with whom she could hold none but the most distant intercourse. Old Bellota went daily to his desk, but had he remained, he could not have hoped to fill even a small part of the great blank in our heroine's life.

But her condition could not escape him altogether, and it gave him great concern. It grieved him to observe how completely her former light-heartedness had disappeared. She never broke out now into glad snatches of song, nor, as of old, teased him with her sallies and lively jests. At first he thought what she missed was the luxurious comfort to which she had been used in England, and he offered readily to surround her with everything just the same. Let her but express a wish, and if within reason, it should be gratified. A horse? He would send over to Barbary for the best that could be bought for money in Mazagan or Mogador. Carriages? She might have half a dozen. Dress? *Carte-blanche* should be dispatched to Worth and Madame Elise to furnish periodical supplies of all that was most gorgeous in the milliner's art. Nay, he would go further. Hearing of the state and ceremony kept up at Fairfax, he expressed himself ready to remodel his small household, and, even at great sacrifice to himself, to adopt now at the eleventh hour the manners and customs of the gentilefolk at home. All this he would have gladly done, and more, to win

back smiles to Lola's eyes. He meant well, and she was grateful for his thoughtfulness and kindness.

But although thus prodigal of offers, the one thing for which she sighed he would not, nor could he give her. It was not for the luxuries of the English home she was pining. To such a simple nature as hers these were not indispensable. No; Rosia Cottage would have seemed a palace to her, with her *Paco*. Looking back regretfully to the past happy days, and forward almost hopelessly to the future she told herself that unless she heard of Frank again, and soon, her life would be almost to burdensome to bear.

Through these first weeks Bellota had no notion whatever that Frank and Lola had met in England. She had not volunteered the information—why should she? It would lead, perhaps, to some painful scene, all to no purpose. It was better not to precipitate matters. Lady Henriette had promised to write and intercede for the lovers, and Lola hoped great things from her advocacy. Indeed, the prospect of this coming letter, and with it news of Frank, was the only bright spot just now in her existence.

The next English mail arrived while Don Mariano was at his office. Thither all his letters were taken. Among them were two for Lola. One he recognized as from Fairfax and Lady Henriette; the other was in a man's handwriting. What man could be in correspondence with Dolores? No man but one he thought, and that one Francis Wriottesley; and as he turned the letter over and over, he longed to break the seal and set all doubts at rest. But he could not bring himself to this, although he felt that he would be justified in questioning his grandchild on the subject.

Then he opened his own letters, all of them on business, save one—that from Lady Henriette. This he read last; and as he read a frown gathered on his wrinkled brow. Her ladyship had plunged almost at once into the matter she had at heart. She confessed that she felt rather guilty at having permitted Dolores and her lover to meet at her house, but they were evidently so much attached to each other that it seemed more than cruel to keep them apart. Besides, she had herself formed a high opinion of Mr. Wriottesley, and was certain he would make Dolores entirely happy. Under these circumstances she now wrote, trusting that Mr. Bellota would no longer place any obstacles in the way of the match.

"Idiot that I was!" cried the old man, crushing up the letter in his hands. "What foul devil prompted me to send the child to that far-off land, away from my own care? Had I kept her here or in Spain, this cursed *rubio* would never have got access

to her ; but I must needs send her to England, away, far away, and there the chances were all against me, long-eared jackass that I was. *Zopenco!* (blockhead) I am rightly served. But now—give her to him? Never, never! Not while I live!”

And then, with a violent exclamation, he tore open the other letter. He was no longer restrained by any feeling of propriety. He must and would know whether this came from the hated source he suspected. Eagerly he devoured its contents, groaning aloud in a fresh access of rage at every epithet of affection, till by the time he had finished reading he had reached a perfect paroxysm of passion. Frank declared at the end that he would return to Gibraltar within a week or two, vowing to win Lola and carry her off in her grandfather's teeth.

“Win her!” shouted Bellota, stamping about the office in a fit of ungovernable fury. “Win her, and in my teeth! We shall see. Is he or I the stronger? At least I will be master of my own. Oh, wicked child! Oh, treacherous woman! Oh, false-hearted, accursed lover!” One and all in turn came in for some measure of his abuse, and the more loudly he reviled, the more fixed was his resolution to thwart all their plans.

By and by, however, he grew somewhat calmer, and as he mastered his passion, he began to consider what steps should be taken next.

First of all, with a sudden impulse, he destroyed Frank's letter to Lola; not one syllable of information should reach her if he had power to prevent it. She should be cut off absolutely and completely this time, at least, from any intercourse with her lover. To render this separation the more certain, he resolved to remove Lola without delay to the custody of her cousins at Ximena, giving them strict charge never to suffer her out of their sight. There at least she would be safe in concealment when Wriottesley first returned, and thence, as soon as he had found it, she might be again removed to another spot, if possible still more secure.

The old man's anger was by no means burned out when he reached Rosia Cottage that night, and the smoldering embers blazed forth again into flame, when Lola came up to ask whether there had been any letters for her by the English mail.

“Sí, yes,” said Bellota, shortly. “Here is one from your friend Lady Henriette?”

“No more?”

“Did you expect others?” he asked, gruffly.

“Why do you question me?”

“You owe me obedience. Do you refuse to answer?”

“I had thought perhaps—” Her grandfather's eye was upon her, and her blush betrayed that she had hoped to hear from Frank.

"Lola, Lady Henriette has written also to me," went on the old man.

"And what did she say?"

Her heart was in a flutter. The supreme moment had come in which her fate was to be decided.

"You can ask me that? Why assume this barefaced ignorance? Oh, child, child! you wring my heart. Have you no love, no pity for the poor old *abuelo* who has cherished you all these years? Have you no regard for his wishes, no belief in his counsel? Remember advice is like the dead—valued too late. Will you not heed my voice? Is my deep affection to be despised and spurned now, after these long years—all for that yellow-haired scoundrel, who would steal you from my side just as he would steal the dollars from my strong box to squander on his vices?"

"*Abuelo*, it is not thus that you will strengthen your cause. Your words may wound, but they cannot persuade me, nor can they hurt my Frank. I cannot believe abuse of him."

She spoke with the dignity of despair. Already she understood that Lady Henriette's appeal was to be made in vain.

"No; you would rather trust his lying and beguiling tongue. You believe him whom you have scarcely known twelve months rather than me—I who have had no thought but for you since first you drew breath in this miserable world."

"I believe him because he has given me his entire trust, and he has mine. What though you may oppose our union now, *abuelo*? We can wait."

"Wait till I am dead, perchance?"

"Pray, pray do not speak like that. Not even to save my *Paco* would I wish that one single hair of your head were hurt. I love you—but I love *Paco* more."

"I tell you plainly, Dolores, that with my consent, you shall never marry him. Not that you will wait for that, I suppose. So shameless a wretch would not hesitate to persuade you to despise my authority."

"That proves how little you know *Paco*. But for him I should never have returned to Gibraltar at all."

"*Como!* What is this?" cried Don Mariano, startled.

"I was ready to wed him over there in England, and waited only till he should make the sign. But he was too loyal. He said it was my duty to come to you."

"And you obey me only because he tells you! Things are come to a pretty pass indeed. *Oye*, listen, heartless girl. I am tired of stooping to beg and pray. Will you give me your promise not to marry this man until you have first obtained my consent—yes or no?"

"No, señor. Because if he wished it, I would marry him to-morrow."

"Then you must take the consequences."

His patience was nearly exhausted. Had Lola bent herself to beg for his consent, he might have been more disposed to give it. But her proud obstinacy began to drive him to extremes.

He grew more and more strong in his resolves to bring her to reason. He would keep her a prisoner; she should be starved into submission; she should end her days in a convent.

But he did not threaten further, and Lola, in her excitement, chiefly occupied with the effort to remain firm, did not take in the full meaning of his words.

Two days later Doña Teresa came, apparently quite by accident, to call at Rosia Cottage. Lola, suspecting nothing, received her very cordially. Doña Teresa was enchanted; she could not find words strong enough to express her admiration at the improvement in our heroine.

"*Ojalá!* would to Heaven I could send Ramona also to Inglaterra, came she back proud and graceful in bearing as thou, child of my heart. It is this same fashionable air she needs. And *que de lujo* what costliness in your apparel! That silk would be cheap at five hundred *reals*. And is it thus they dress the hair in London and in Paris, plain and without curls? It pleases me much. And your jewels, they are new: that locket, a *prendá*, a love-taken. No? And tell me, Lolita, they are rich these English ladies to whom you went, and *titulos*, they had titles, and were of the high aristocracy of England? Doubtless you spent with them the pleasant time. Balls, reunions, *tertulias*, rejoicings always. How tame and dull must this narrow fortress seem, now that you have seen the world! Would that some of us had half your luck. But you no longer care for us, Lolita. Old friends are forgotten now for new."

"Say not so. You and my cousins I shall always love. How fares it with them all at Agua Dulce?"

"They have but one thought just now; they are longing to see you again. Ramona is dying to talk to you and hear of all that you have seen. When can you come to us? You will not refuse? Come, even for a day."

This quiet invitation took Lola quite unawares. She was loath to leave the Rock lest Frank might arrive the moment her back was turned, yet she had no desire to be unfriendly to her relatives. Besides, it was in itself a boon to fly from her grandfather's cross face and unceasing upbraidings. It never occurred to her that this innocently-couched invitation concealed another plot against her.

She answered therefore almost eagerly that she also looked forward to the visit to the farm.

"And when, *queridita*?"

Doña Teresa was a dry old chip, but she could on occasion be affectionate. Just now the warmth of her manner was as genial as the cold pink that comes on a snowy ridge at the time of a winter dawn.

"To-day, at once, if you please."

The sooner off, the sooner back; and the less chance of missing her lover on his return.

"Well said," cried the other. "But hardly to-day. Don Mariano—he does not return till night-fall, will he not wish to see you before you leave?"

"I know not," replied Lola, sadly. Time was when he could not brook to let her out of his sight; but he was no longer the doting grandfather of her happy childish days. His love for her was gone, she feared; burned up in his fierce dislike for Francis Wriottesley.

Doña Teresa remained for the night at the cottage, so Lola did not find herself alone with her grandfather before they started. But he spoke to her kindly, much as if nothing had happened between them, and talked much of the quiet ease to be found in a country life.

"Would that I could tear myself from this noisy town to end my days among the green slopes or in some sheltered valley of the Sierra."

"Why not purchase land near to our Agua Dulce, cousin?" suggested Teresa. "There is the Cortijo de Acemila; the house is good and spacious, the vineyard of the best, and the spot retired."

"Too retired," interposed Lola, who had no desire to be thus entombed alive. "Some day the *mala gente*, bad people, robbers, brigands from the Sierra, would descend to carry you off, *abuelo*, as prize."

"True," said Doña Teresa, "such things have been, when the chance of ransom is good."

"I am but a *pobre*," cried Don Mariano, crossing himself, "small profit to those who captured me."

"Throw that bone to another dog," remarked Teresa, slyly. "I and my children would be rich were we to touch but one day's gains that come to Crutchett's Ramp."

"Foolishness! It is not so. I have but few farthings, and I am old and feeble—they might carry me off—what matter? I should need no ransom; my life is nearly spent—they might end it for all I care."

He spoke sorrowfully and in a trembling voice, which appealed to Lola strongly. Hers seemed a crooked and a wayward fate. She had to choose between two evil paths. Either she must be

faithless to the man whom she loved best in the world, or embitter her grandfather's last days.

She rose from her seat and went round to kiss her grandfather once more, fondly as of old.

"You will promise?" he whispered, eagerly.

"I cannot, I cannot indeed," replied Lola, sadly. Why was he thus obstinately bent on marring all the happiness of her young life?

And thus they parted for the night. Ere they met again, many strange things had happened to make this evening a point of departure very memorable to Lola.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHO SPEAKS TO ME OF "MUST?"

JUNE mornings in the south of Spain are bright and beautiful, with a sun that is hot, and sometimes treacherous, even to those who call this the land of their birth. It behooved the ladies therefore to travel betimes, before the great heat of the day came on. Soon after six the steeds were at the door. For Teresa, a patient mule, bearing the chair-saddle or *jamuga* which Spanish ladies patronize when not disposed, or, more exactly, when not able to ride *à la Inglesa*; this was provided also with a couple of feather pillows and a footstool to make her comfortable through the five-and-twenty miles of jogging that lay between Rosia and her home. Lola rode her own saddle-horse, a long-tailed gray, owning a not remote kinship with the Bat, and renowned for its paces and its temper. A third horse carried the *moso* or groom, as well as a pair of deep panniers known as *capachos* wherein the luggage was bestowed. Although the visit to Agua Dulce was only for a few days, Doña Teresa persuaded Lola to take with her a quantity of clothes. The plea was that Ramona, and, for the matter of that, she herself, was anxious to inspect at leisure the most fashionable modes, such as people wore over yonder in the great world. So Lola good-naturedly packed up more than one *chef d'œuvre* of the milliner's art, and filled a large box with various articles of apparel.

Not many months had passed since Lola had received her first lessons in horsemanship from her cousin Lucas at the farm. Then it had been her highest ambition to assimilate herself to those proud, white-faced English women she had seen galloping to and fro upon the shores of the Bay. Like them, she wished to wear a faultless *Amazona* and to have no fear in

the saddle. Few people could have denied that already she had attained the wish of her heart. As she started from the door of the cottage, with her well-fitting gray habit, her wide-brimmed gray hat looped up with black braid and carrying a costly ostrich feather, she looked a princess. Nor was homage wanting. As she passed along the Line wall into the Alameda Garden, under the Southport gate, and through the town, every eye was turned upon her, and more than one young English officer on his road to the North Front, for a gallop before breakfast, returned to tell at the mess-table of the stunning girl he had seen that morning while they were in bed.

Even more startling was the effect Lola produced upon her cousins at Agua Dulce. Lucas had never concealed his admiration for Lola; but he had borne her absence in England without great anguish of mind. His was not a passion to live on memories, only; if the flame was to burn brightly, he must have an occasional glimpse of the object he adored. He might in truth, have forgotten Lola altogether but for his mother's repeated reminders. But for her cautious preaching he would long since have laid himself at the feet of some pretty girl in the town hard by. Doña Teresa, however, never lost sight of the fact that some day Lola would inherit all her grandfather's wealth, and she never failed to impress upon Lucas that here was a chance which it would be madness to neglect. Now on their arrival at the farm, the old lady was highly gratified when she saw her son's eyes kindle with admiration as they rested upon the beautiful girl.

"What recipes do they keep over there, *prima mia* (my cousin) for brightening the cheeks and making the eyes glitter? There are many maidens in this corner of the earth who would gladly try such medicine. You come back to us like the roses in spring—like a nosegay of gorgeous sweet-scented flowers."

So spoke Lucas as he gave Lola his hand to help her alight from her horse, making as though he would also claim a cousin's privilege to greet her with a kiss. But Lola put him aside at once, speaking civilly but with a gesture of the most superb disdain, as she ran forward to embrace Ramona with effusion. The latter kissed our heroine on both cheeks, then held Lola's face away as if to feast her eyes with the sight, only to kiss it again and again with the same expression of ecstatic delight.

"And Miguelito! growing taller and more handsome day by day," went on Lola to the little cousin, who stood bashfully by waiting for his turn.

"*Prima* (cousin), the clouds have cleared away, day has succeeded night, and you are like the bright sun re-appearing to gladden us with the splendor of your beautiful eyes."

"*Vaya!*" growled Lucas; "is there no mad-house handy for this soft-headed poet?"

"Kind and considerate as ever, Lucas! Is it because he is glad to greet me again that you scold him thus?"

"Come, children, come; the sun stings as do the wasps," said Doña Teresa, leading the way into the principal room of the house.

It was cool and dark, with jealousies close shut, but barely furnished; walls "flatted" with a wash of dirty yellow; on the floor was no carpet; the only furniture was a few straight-backed chairs with a sofa of faded damask placed in the post of honor. On this they seated Lola with much ceremony, and gathered round, plying her with questions, to all of which she replied readily and with good-humor. She was pleased to revisit *Agua Dulce*. The whole family fêted and made so much of her, that after the late sad and lonely weeks at *Rosia Cottage* she felt a distinct relief, and was grateful to them all. For the moment much of her old joyousness returned. She laughed with *Ramona*, rallied *Miguel* on his love affairs, and with admirable good-humor and quiet self-possession put back as if unnoticed, the high-flown compliments of *Lucas*, now love-inflamed.

The day passed off as do all days in these parts during the fierce summer weather. They dined at midday, the *comida* or principal meal consisting of the stereotyped *puchero*, with its pyramid of *garbanzo* beans surrounding its red sausages, fat bacon, and lump of ragged beef; after this, in honor of *Lola*, appeared a large flat dish of *natilia*, a sweet compound not unlike a custard pudding. The dinner was good yet of course there were none of the luxurious appliances which had surrounded her at *Fairfax*—neither glass, nor flowers, nor brightly-burnished plate; but the table-cloth was white and spotless, and they gave her a napkin, and with it a hearty welcome. Dinner over, like the others, *Lola* was glad to retire for the *siesta* in the afternoon, from which she woke only as the sun was falling low, and the cooler air made it possible for the ladies to leave the house. Then they took her to see the sights—to visit the store-room with its monstrous wine-vats, filled with the product of their own vines upon the mountain slopes, and destined perchance to find its way to *Xeres*, and thence to the English market, duly sweetened and loaded, to pass as the purest sherry. Here, too, were goodly supplies for home consumption—sides of bacon, hams cured in sugar, piles of fruit, many ropes of onions, heaps of crimson tomatoes—famed by local repute as the most potent of love-philters—sacks of *garbanzo* beans and strings of garlic. From the store-room to

the farm, where all the men doffed their hats and gave her a smiling welcome; and so on to the *dehesa*, where ran the yearlings; the mares, too, passed in droves with their long-legged colts at their side; farther off the terrible bulls bellowed a few genial notes, and pretended for the moment to be perfectly tame. Then they all returned to the house. The "*animas*" rang out from the bells; they had their evening-meal; and so the day was done.

Lola was somewhat surprised to find that the room they had given her was not that which she had occupied before. Oh no, they told her; she was now the great dame; she must be treated with formality; they could not consign Miss Bellota to the small den which had been good enough for little Lolita on her return from school. But Ramona would be near her in this new room—next door; in fact Ramona's was but an ante-chamber leading to the best guest-chamber of the house.

As the time came for retiring to rest, Ramona herself accompanied Lola up-stairs, carrying a long brass-handled lamp brightly-burnished, with eight burners, from which streamed tails of fire as it swung to and fro in her grasp.

"You will be comfortable, I trust, *Lola mia*," said Romana, apologetically. "Here, in our humble home, you will miss the rich superfluities you found in the palace of those great English grandees. But we have tried to make this to your taste. In the balcony are flowers, and a cricket in its cage, and when the persans are opened you will find an *alcarassa** hanging to keep the air cool, and, *Lola*, I am close at hand. If you desire anything you will call me. No?—And I will be your maid, your tire-woman, such as rich ladies have to help them dress. When the morning comes, I will wake you and open your shutters."

"*Mil gracias*, Ramonita; but all that I can do for myself. I am not helpless. Yet not the less are you good and kind."

"Sleep, then, and rest till to-morrow. *Adios!*"

"At dawn! do we breakfast, as of old, as soon as the sun is over the hill? You must wake me indeed, for to such hours I am now unused."

"Idle, lazy girl! Does not God help them who rise early?"

"Yes, but *las mañanicas de abril son sabrosas para dormir*—the early mornings of spring are delightful for sleep."

"*Sí*," said Ramona, laughing; "and however early we rise, the dawn comes no sooner. But good-night, good-night! Do not move till I return."

* The *alcarassa* is a rough jar of red porous earthenware. When filled with water it gives off by evaporation a certain amount of moisture, which the air as it passes picks up: this evaporation is rapid, and the water left in the jar soon becomes cold as ice.

But Lola slept badly, and, while it was still dark, longed for a mouthful of fresh air. The windows were, however, close shut according to the custom of this country, where people have a strange horror of ventilation, and dread more especially the breezes of the night. Not only were Lola's shutters hermetically sealed, but in spite of all her efforts they refused to open. Presently, as if aroused by the noise, Ramona rushed in from the outer room.

"*Dios de mi vida!* But you startled me. Why are you thus unsettled, Lola? It is not yet three o'clock."

"I want air—the fresh air of heaven."

"Of heaven! Rather of the *infierno*—of the depths below, from which you will catch *pulmonia*, the sickness that kills like a knife the same day that it strikes."

"But these jealousies, they will not open," went on Lola, petulantly.

"No," replied Ramona in an indifferent voice; "they are fastened with a spring from outside. You must wait—wait till they begin to rouse below, and then we will have them opened, and you shall have the fresh air you want, fastidious child."

With this Lola had to be contented and she went back to bed. It seemed strange that these shutters—the first among many with which she was acquainted—should fasten from the outside; but she was too guileless to suspect that the alteration had been made solely on her account; nor was she surprised to find Ramona alert ready to join her at the slightest alarm. She took this merely as a mark of affectionate attention.

The second day of Lola's visit to Agua Dulce passed off as pleasantly as had the first. The two girls spent the morning in trying on in turn the various adornments which our heroine had brought out with her at Doña Teresa's special request. The old lady stood by and did audience, smiling approval as Dolores appeared in wreath, opera-cloak, costume or wrapper, but in heart rather discontented, for she was a mother and grudged these possessions to other girls than her own. Yet she petted her visitor no less than did the rest of the family, and joined as heartily as they in the general chorus of disapproval that greeted Lola when she announced her intention of returning to Gibraltar that very evening.

"One day—no more! Is that all you can spare to friends so old as we are?" cried Doña Teresa.

"Some magnet on two legs is drawing you back," went on Ramona, with a meaning laugh.

"Who is the *chico*, and what is the color of his coat?"

"Red, of course," answered Lucas for her. "He is one of those usurping Englishmen who have settled like locusts upon

Spanish soil. The insolent robbers! may a bad stroke of lightning part them!"

"*Calla*, Lucas," said Doña Teresa. "Our Lola here is half English herself and it is indecent and underbred to rail at them."

"They will not suffer much, madam, for the worst that he can say. The idle wishes of the envious make the sufferers grow fat. But when will the horses be ready?"

"Indeed, Lola, you must not leave us quite so soon. Your grandfather would think we had ill-used you and that you were forced to run away. You could not gain the fortress before the gates are closed for the night. There are many leagues to travel, and it is now past two."

"Five hours not enough to cover as many leagues!" laughed Lola. "I do not ride as the snail walks."

Meanwhile Lucas had exchanged glances with his mother, and after a moment the latter said:

"You cannot ride back alone, Lola; it would not be formal nor right—even were there no *mala gente* to fear, and of them the rumors daily increase. Nor could a man to-day be spared to escort you."

"I have affairs—in the town—to which I must attend at once, or I would gladly accompany you," said Lucas. "I am ready indeed to act as your slave now or for the rest of my life."

"And Miguel?" asked Lola, disdainfully to notice Lucas and his devotion.

"Miguel," said Lucas, hastily, "is behindhand with his accounts. Besides there is no horse to suit so timid a cavalier. Since Manso died there has remained no beast which he had courage to mount."

"*Ea!* To please Lolita, brother, I would seat myself readily upon the horns of a bull."

"Go, then, and take your pick, there are several in the plains. But a donkey would suit you best. Better ride a donkey that carries you, says the proverb, than a horse which kicks you off."

"It means, then," said Lola, with rising anger, "that I must remain here or ride to Gibraltar alone?"

"That surely you would not dream of doing," cried Doña Teresa; "nor, indeed, could I permit it. Wait at least, sweet child, until to-morrow."

"*Mañana*, then; to-morrow be it."

But when the morrow came, Macho, her horse, was found to have cast a shoe, and at the forge the stupid smith had cut away too much of the frog.

"Macho is lame," said Doña Teresa.

"Surely I can ride some other horse?"

"Of course; but which, Lucas?"

Lucas was doubtful. Bandolero had never carried a side-saddle; Bavieca was out of sorts; Urdax had had two long journeys the day before; and so on with a string of names.

"A mule, then, let me have, with pack-saddle and pillow. To Gibraltar I must return, even though I tramp it on my ten toes."

"This sounds but discourteous to us," observed Doña Teresa, gravely. "In what have we offended you that you desire so eagerly to leave us? Cannot you wait but one day longer?"

With rather a bad grace Lola submitted, and by degrees a third passed, as had the first and second. But for the fear that Frank might arrive at Gibraltar during her absence, there would have been little at which she could chafe.

The hours were monotonous, but not more so than many she had passed at Agua Dulce before, and her cousins were kind to her still, in spite of their expressed chagrin at her wish to leave them so soon. Ramona, indeed, was so wrapped up in Lola, that she never let the girl out of her sight; and Lola remembered this later on, when there was no longer an attempt to keep up appearances, and it became evident that she was to be detained indefinitely at Agua Dulce, whether she wished it or not.

The first suspicion of this crossed her mind when she discovered that night, that, in spite of repeated promises, her shutters still fastened with a spring she did not understand. She complained to Ramona that her windows were practically locked on the outside.

"Yes, yes;" replied Ramona; "they were within reach of the ground. The walls of the *corral* might be scaled; thieves might easily enter."

"What!" said Lola, derisively. "Do you put bolts outside a door to prevent thieves from coming in?"

"No, no; there are bolts also inside. But if they tried those outer ones they would be heard."

"Give me some other room then. This seems like a cage."

"It is too late, Lolita, now. To-morrow—"

"To-morrow I start for home."

"Yes; to-morrow you start for home. Can you not endure this poor room for one night longer, no more?"

There were many more excuses forthcoming the following morning to stay Lola's departure. There was talk of a *tertulia* in the town—would she not stay to renew her acquaintance with the young *pollos* of Ximena? What inducement could a *tertulia* with its glasses of cold water and *azucarillas*, the music of a *sambomba*, and its local gossip, be to our fashionable Dolores? She said as much; and with such an air of contempt as made most of her hearers indignant at the insult passed upon their festivities. Then Lucas came in open-mouthed to relate an

outrage perpetrated only the night before by *mala gente*—a band of evilly-disposed *rateros* who had descended from the Sierra, spoiled a neighboring *cortijo*, and carried off its owner to their mountains.

"*Dios mio!*" cried Doña Teresa, crossing herself. "Has it come to this! in our quiet corner, which no noise of crime has troubled these many years!"

"Have the villians been pursued?" asked the valorous Miguel.

"No, *hijo*," replied Lucas. "The *civiles* are withdrawn, as you know, to fight for the cause of order, and in their absence we have no protectors—but a few brave gentlemen like yourself. Will you join in the chase?"

"I am ready," replied Miguel, turning rather pale. "Are there many?"

"The band is a large one: it has been re-inforced by several *presidarios* (galley slaves), who have burst their bonds over yonder upon the great Rock, and given the idle English the slip."

"Child," said Teresa to Lola, "it is a mercy you did not start as you had proposed; even now you might be a prisoner in their hands."

Lola, however, was by no means alive to the danger, and in her secret heart treated the whole story with contempt, as the merest fabrication.

"Pouf! I should have no fear to travel the road a dozen times over."

"*Vaya!* but you have courage, Lola," said Ramona.

"Such as I have not," added her mother. "I cannot suffer you to leave us yet, Dolores, at least, not until we know the road is safe."

"*Pues, señora*, then stay I will not," cried our heroine hotly. "If I waited till these paper brigands have been pursued and caught, here would I end my days. Throw this bone to another dog. I do not believe in such songs as these."

"You discredit my sacred word?" asked Lucas, turning red. "Is, then, the name of liar inscribed upon my face? *Pues no faltaba mas*—no more was wanted—this indeed fills the cup."

"You have been imposed upon, Lucas."

"There lives not in Andalusia the man that would impose upon Lucas Peñaflor. This that I tell you, señorita, is the truth. *Rateros* there are, here in the plains close at hand—*mala gente* that would ask no better spoil than the granddaughter of a *Rico* like Don Mariano Bellota."

"*Mala gente* there are, no doubt; but not in the plain; they might be found nearer by those who cared to search."

"I tell you, child," interposed Doña Teresa, peremptorily, "that you cannot, you must not leave us yet."

"Who speaks to me of must?"

"Your grandfather has intrusted you to my care; and it is for him I speak. Here for the present, Dolores, you must remain."

"*Jamas*: never, unless by force."

"It is only headstrong children that must be compelled by force."

"You shall not keep me. I will go to the authority, to the alcalde, and claim my rights. Who are you to dare to imprison me? I owe you no allegiance; you have no right, no power, to detain me here."

"Right and power both, Dolores, when that which we do is clearly for your good. It would be wildest madness to expose you now to risk such as—"

"*Ea!*" cried Lola, "you cannot deceive me thus. Call things by their right names. The road to the rock is safe enough. It is not for me you tremble; speak more plainly, confess that my wicked *abuelo* charged you to keep me here against my will. Cease your subterfuges. I have fallen into a trap; you have combined with him."

"Such language ill becomes a modest girl. That you should show scant reverence for your elders, I pass over; at least spare your grandfather. He does not deserve your reproaches, and has no thought but your happiness and welfare."

"Señora, of his great affection I have made full proof ere this. I owe him no thanks, nor you. But it is idle for me to struggle. I know that for the present I must submit. May the Holy Virgin give me strength to endure so much harshness and cruelty."

"Why do you anticipate evil? Who talks of harsh treatment?"

"Am I not a prisoner?"

"No!"

"Then may I return to Gibraltar without delay?"

"That were impossible and for the reasons that you know. Be content, Dolores: we mean you well, we do indeed."

But from this moment there was no more attempt to keep up appearances. Lola was to all intents and purposes, a prisoner, free only to walk the narrow strip of garden within the inclosure of the *cortijo*, and even here constantly under the eye of Ramona or Doña Teresa herself. There was no longer any mystery about the fastenings of her bedroom shutters; indeed, she was openly locked in every night.

Poor child! Of all the troubles that had overtaken her, this appeared by far the most severe. Yet, with courage heightened by the injustice under which she suffered, she did her best to

comport herself calmly, although fretting inwardly with a pain it was difficult to conceal. They were all against her. Doña Teresa was gaoler; Ramona, under her, acted as police attendant and spy; Lucas, rough and coarse by nature, was now a thousand times more hateful, when brutal indifference replaced his former fulsome attentions. Alejandro was absent serving with his regiment in Catalonia, or she might have gained something by appealing to his chivalry as an officer and a gentleman; only Miguel remained—kind-hearted little Miguel, cipher and butt for the whole family, too timid and insignificant she feared to take up the championship of any damsel in distress.

So the days passed on in monotonous sequence, one the exact counterpart of the other, till she had been more than a fortnight at Agua Dulce. How much longer was this to last? As her case grew more and more hopeless, her heart began to fail her, and in spite of all her efforts, her wretchedness was plainly visible upon her pale face and in her wistful eyes. She hardly spoke, replying only in monosyllables when any of the family addressed her; and she seldom left the house. What pleasure could it give her to pace beneath the olive-trees in the small orchard garden, or walk in the *corral* under Ramona's watchful escort? She saw no new faces. Few people visited the *cortijo* except on business, and these never came to the private part of the house. Now and then a passing *arriero* halted to water his horse, or an importunate beggar, refusing to be satisfied with the empty "*por dios hermano*," came in at the principal door to claim alms as a matter of right. But in no case was Lola suffered to have conversation with them.

Her sole hope was Frank. Confident in the impetuous energy of his nature, she tried to console herself with the thought that he must ere long contrive to come to her. He must surely be able to devise some method of eluding the vigilance of those by whom she was surrounded. Why, why did he delay?

Then followed, with the reaction of hope deferred, an almost sickening terror that she was deserted, forgotten; it was time that she were dead. *Paco* was neglecting her and leaving her to her fate. Then, as rapidly, she took heart of grace, and concluded that he did not come to her because she was too effectually concealed. If she could but give him a hint of her condition, no obstacles, she felt certain, would keep him long from her side.

But how was she to convey a message to Gibraltar? They all watched her closely day and night—all except Miguel, and him they evidently distrusted, and kept as far as possible from her. If she could but speak with him alone, she might perhaps win him to her side.

Quite by chance, one evening, came the occasion for which Lola longed. Supper was laid; Doña Teresa, with Miguel and Lola were seated in the *comedor* or dining-room, while Ramona in the kitchen gave the last artistic touches to a savory stew. Suddenly Doña Teresa was called away.

"Miguel," said Lola at once, "you are good and kind, and have professed ever to be my friend; help me now in my dire distress."

"*Prima*, it goes to my heart to see you thus tearful always and sad. But I am powerless. Who listens to me in this house?"

"That is but an excuse, Miguelito. You are afraid. Do you call yourself a gentleman, a *caballero*, and yet refuse to be my friend?"

"I do not fear; I would face an eight-year bull to give you pleasure."

"Then prove your words. Help me but out of this *calaboso* (dungeon), and you shall earn a rich reward. My *Paco* is rich; he will give you—the wealth of the Indies—what you ask."

"Señorita, you say I am no gentleman, doubtless you think so, or you would not insult me with such an offer. If I serve you, it will be from compassion, from pure good will."

"Then you do not refuse? May all the Saints in Heaven bless you," cried Dolores, taking his hands.

"But, Lola, what can I do? Think you that they would suffer me to carry you off by force? I am but one, and they many, they would eat me alive."

"The battle is not always to the strong; the tortoise beat the hare. But this at least you can do; inform my *novio* that I am here in jail!"

"Gladly, *prima*; that and more. But how? Lucas will not suffer me to leave the farm. You are not the only prisoner at Agua Dulce."

"Send a letter for me."

"Who would take it?"

"*Ea!*" cried Lola, scornfully. "You have no real desire to help me. Why waste more words? Eat then your supper and sleep in safety. Your heart is not so big as a sparrow's!"

"Let me but have time, Lolita *mia*. I will do all you wish. If I hesitate, it is that we may not fail."

"You are true, Miguel?" said Lola, looking straight at him. "You will not sacrifice me? Can I trust you?"

"With your life—I swear it."

Then Doña Teresa returned, and Lola had no further opportunity of conversing with Miguel that night.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOME OLD FRIENDS FALL OUT.

"I HAVE been given to understand, Francis, that you have been some weeks in England. Can this be possible? Friends write me word that they have seen you in the Park, that they meet you at people's houses. No doubt you have been enjoying yourself much—so much that you appear to be forgotten the fact of my existence. Whether this is quite in accordance with the respect you owe me, I leave it to yourself to judge.

"I send this to your club, as I hardly know where else to address you."

This letter Frank received from Grimswych a day or two before Lola left England. Doubtful how deep he might be in his uncle's bad books, he paid a visit at once, in Lincoln's Inn, to Mr. Pownceby, who gave him little encouragement.

"Sir Hector has been rather put out, Mr. Francis. He has sent more than once to know how your account stood, and whether we were aware of any outstanding liabilities. I could not altogether conceal from him that you had been drawing heavily of late; and, if you will permit me to say so, I should recommend you not to irritate him just at present."

"I had better go down to Grimswych, I think."

"Yes; I would, Mr. Francis. You know it always simplifies matters when you see him in person. I should go at once."

"I cannot for two days."

"That is—pardon me—most unwise. After that letter I should take the first train down."

"But there are imperative reasons why I should postpone it for at least two days. I must go to Southampton to-morrow."

"Ah!" said Mr. Pownceby, as if he knew all about it. Then shaking his head sagely, he went on with his arguments. Delay was most unwise. Sir Hector was growing very tetchy in his old age. He would resent anything like neglect. There might be serious risk in angering him.

"And Sir Hector, Mr. Francis, is just now possessed with a rather strange illusion. He fancies himself extremely poor."

Frank smiled.

"Surely his affairs—" he began.

"You may, I think, rely upon me, Mr. Francis. His rent-roll is increasing, not diminishing. This is only a passing fancy. But I tell you of it in order that you may avoid the weak spot. Don't ask him for money if you can help it."

Frank looked grave.

"I'm sorry to say I have come home with no other object."

Mr. Pownceby shook his head.

"Sir Hector talks already as if you had brought him to the verge of pauperism."

"Why, I have asked for no more than he has often given me of his own free will. What has put this strange notion into his head?"

"I make no accusations, Mr. Francis, but I would wish to put you on your guard. There are influences at work at Grimswych which are certainly adverse to you. That is why I think your immediate presence there is of such vital importance."

What did this mean? Frank pressed Mr. Pownceby to be more explicit, but, with the customary caution of his cloth, the old lawyer would not commit himself further. It was with some misgivings, therefore, when his painful farewells were said to Lola, that Frank hastened to pay a visit to his uncle at Grimswych Hall.

He was not expected, of course, and there was no one to meet him at the station. Arrived at the house itself, Butterfield, the old butler, came forward after some delay and gave him a sort of stiff, uncivil welcome.

"Mr. Francis! can I believe my eyes?" The man was holding the door only half-open, and seemed indisposed to let Frank in.

"Well, Butterfield, am I to remain here on the door-step all day?"

"Hoh no, sir, if so be as you wish to come in. We thought perhaps you would not care to visit the house again."

There was so much unmistakable insolence in his manner that Frank guessed at once that this was the enemy to whom Mr. Pownceby had vaguely referred.

"I'd come back once more, Butterfield, whatever happens, only to settle accounts with you. Stand aside. Where is your master?"

Frank passed into the hall as if the place were already his own.

"Where is Sir Hector, I say?"

"In the justice-room. He lives there mostly. All the rest of the house is shut up. Such calls as he've had upon him lately! Can't afford to keep the place agoing much longer."

"You're all bound for the work-house, I suppose," said Frank.

"And no wonder; some people's so extravagant. He've put down the carriage and sold your second horse. This year he wouldn't go to London, except for a month before Heaster, and now he's let the house in Heaton Square—all along of wasteful,

spendthrift ways. But he won't stand it, Mr. Francis; the worm'll turn."

"Quite so! and so shall I, which it may be to your advantage to hear, my friend. But I don't intend to bandy words with such as you. I shall explain what is necessary to my uncle myself."

"You can't see him till I've told him you're here. His orders are quite positive, Mr. Francis."

"Thank you, Mr. Butterfield; you are very kind, but I do not choose to wait for your good word. Stand out of the way, will you?" cried Frank, suddenly changing his tone, and looking so menacing that Butterfield let him pass without further ado. But as Frank disappeared the butler sent after him a scowl of satisfaction, as if he foresaw what would be the result of the coming interview.

The fact was, that from the first there had never been much love lost between these two. Before Frank's advent Mr. Butterfield had been a great personage at Grimswych, only second indeed to Sir Hector himself. He formed himself as far as was possible upon his master's model, imitated his speech as nearly as he could, dressed after him as closely as he dared, and held up perpetually a sort of uncomplimentary mirror in which Sir Hector, had he cared to look, might have seen himself caricatured. So servilely did Mr. Butterfield reproduce his master, that he took also the color of his moods. When Sir Hector frowned, the butler made the servant's hall tremble; when Sir Hector was pleased, Mr. Butterfield might have secured an engagement as a jester at any penny gaff or free-and-easy in the East End.

He had naturally been an object of reverence with all the aspirants to Sir Hector's favor; they had recognized in him an official with much influence at court, and, acting under home advice, they generally sought to continue in his good graces. In return he patronized them one by one, as they rose to favor and fell, giving them a helping hand up or kicking away the ladder and expediting their decline and fall. Frank had never kootooed to him; and this was an injury grievous to bear. But the butler was wise in his generation, and did not dare interfere with a lad who grew more and more firmly fixed in Sir Hector's affections. Years passed, and as Frank became indisputably recognized as the heir, Butterfield's outward manner changed; but at heart he hated the young fellow still. Frank, too, in his wild, youthful spirits had more than once made the man his butt, filling his pockets with cat-erpillars, sewing up the ends of his coat-sleeves as it hung in the butler's pantry while Butterfield was busy cleaning the plate, and on one occasion stretching a wire from the sideboard to the dining-room table—over which the poor man fell with a tray of glass.

All this Butterfield treasured up against Frank, and waited, hoping his turn might come. Butterfield read a good deal of his master's correspondence; having thus all the delight of pleasing letters without the trouble of answering them, while those that were unsatisfactory gave him no annoyance at all. In this way he was soon aware that unpleasant news had come from Gibraltar, and he chuckled to think that Frank had laid himself open at last. He lost no opportunity to injure by artful innuendo; though having gained his information surreptitiously, he did not dare refer in so many words to what had passed at Gibraltar, but he humored his master's fad for miserliness, and laid the whole blame on Frank. By the time our hero returned to Grimswych, the ground was all undermined and at any moment there might be an explosion.

Frank stood before his uncle. He had knocked gently at the door, but had entered without waiting for the usual "Come in." The old gentleman, who was reading, said testily:

"I did not ring. What brings you here, Butterfield? I said you were never to disturb me in the forenoon."

"It is not Butterfield," began Frank, and the sound of his voice of course betrayed him at once.

"Francis!" cried Sir Hector, rising promptly to his full height, and taking his post on the hearth-rug. "Who sent for you?"

His shrewd, fierce eyes flared out from under his bushy white brows, like lights from under a penthouse roof. His mouth, clean-shaven and plainly visible, was drawn down, and there was anger even in his beaked nose.

"Did not you?"

"Not I, sir; I can survive your absence. If you do not think fit to come of your own accord, I shall never send in pursuit of you."

Sir Hector's tone was so different from that which he generally adopted, that Frank knew something was wrong.

"I am sorry I was detained on the way—"

"I can admit no excuses. Nothing should have detained you. Your first duty was to come to me."

"I only arrived—"

"I know when you arrived. You have had time enough to travel around by the North Pole; yet Grimswych is not a hundred miles from town."

"If you will not hear my excuses, I will not attempt to make them," said Frank, rather hotly.

Sir Hector waved his hand.

"Spare me your heroics, sir. May I ask what brings you thus unexpectedly to England? More money, I suppose? It is time I should speak in plain language. My means will not

admit of this constant drain. I have already been compelled to retrench—"

"You shall not have reason to complain of me again, Uncle Hector. I wish to be a burden on no one. I owe you much already, I know, more than I can ever repay, but I will accept no more."

"Where are you going, pray?"

"I see I am not welcome here; I shall return to town and then rejoin my regiment at Gibraltar."

"To Gibraltar, of course. Your affections are centred there, I know," said Sir Hector, with a sneer. "You wish, no doubt, to continue your philandering with this common person whom you wished to foist upon me as your bride. I confess your matchless audacity at the moment staggered me. A girl altogether beneath you in station—"

"Oh no, Uncle Hector; there you are mistaken."

"Silence, Francis. I am perfectly well informed. She is not even a lady."

"Why, she has been living for months with the Ladies Fairfax!"

"As companion or lady's maid?"

"As their guest and intimate friend," replied Frank, with rising wrath. "Is it likely that they would receive her if she were not a gentlewoman?"

"Women are fools enough for anything. They cannot have known her antecedents."

"And do you?"

"Yes, from beginning to end."

"You can have heard no harm of Dolores Bellota. A more pure and guileless being does not exist beneath God's sky."

"Ta, ta! your fly-away similes will not serve, Francis. Rhapsodical arguments are for lovers, not for men of my time of life. I tell you I know all about her."

"Then I defy you to say you know anything to her disadvantage!"

"I know this, Francis, that the only relation she has alive is a disreputable old Jew money-lender—perhaps you are deep in his books already—and that her mother was no better than she should be."

"Pray, uncle, do not talk in this manner. I should be sorry indeed to quarrel with you, but I cannot listen in patience."

"That no one knows who was her father—"

"Uncle you are going too far."

"And that she herself, this angelic piece of goods of whom you rave—she herself—"

"Silence!" thundered Frank. "I owe you much, Uncle

Hector, but had you increased a thousandfold the benefits for which I must always be grateful, it would not justify such language concerning the girl I love. Some wretch has poisoned your mind against her—she is the sweetest child that ever lived. She can bear comparison with the best in the land; she, she— But it is idle for me to seek to plead; you have resolved to drive me from you. I have lost your affections I see, and this is but a subterfuge to bring matters to a head. You would fasten a quarrel upon me; you wish to make me forget myself, and what is due to you, my first and greatest friend. It is not necessary. I can understand it all. I will go; I will no longer trespass on your kindness. Good-bye, Uncle Hector. The day will come, perhaps, when you will regret your hasty words and your harsh treatment. Good-bye!”

“Francis! Francis!” cried Sir Hector, in a low quavering voice, “come back. I can prove what I say. Come back, come back!”

But Francis was gone. Presently Sir Hector rose and rang the bell furiously.

“Mr. Francis, Butterfield; have you seen him? Has he left the house?”

“He have, Sir Hector; he tore out as if the bailiffs were after him, as it’s my belief they are; and he’d have knocked me down if I’d a let him.”

“Don’t stand chattering there! Go, run, saddle a horse, send the groom.”

“You surely would not ask him to come back, Sir Hector? The ungratefullest—and after all he’s had, to say such things of you—”

“What? When?”

“Just as he was a leaving. He swore that he’d never darken these doors again. He called you all sorts of names, Sir Hector.”

“That will do, Butterfield. You can leave the room. Mr. Francis seems determined to make the breach inseparable; I do not wish to hear his name again.”

But the old gentleman was miserable for the rest of the day. He could not forget in one short day the years of affectionate intercourse with Frank; he could not without a sharp pang tear the young fellow from his heart. These feelings were strengthened by a night’s rest, and early next day he settled himself down to send an olive branch. The letter below was put into Frank’s hands just as he was leaving England.

Not without tenderness Frank noted the tremulous characters. Had emotion and remorse helped to increase the natural feebleness of age? What could have induced the old man to write? Then he read:

"Instead of leaving me, Francis, with such hasty and unbridled passion, you might have paused to inquire whether I had not grounds for refusing my consent to your marriage with this nameless Spanish girl. You looked on my determination, doubtless, as the obstinacy of a silly old man. I am old, but I am not silly, and my decisions are deduced logically from substantial bases of facts. Read the inclosed, and then tell me whether I was not entirely justified in the language I used. This letter I send you is not a mere fabrication, I am sure. I should never have relied upon such a production alone, but unhappily from the inquiries I have made I find that all its allegations are substantially true.

"It grieves me to think that the cordial understanding which has hitherto existed between us should have come so suddenly to an end; and yet, Francis, I am ready to meet you half-way. Humor me but in this one thing; break off your connection with this person who is so entirely unworthy of you, and we will say no more about the past."

Frank turned with a sigh to the inclosure.

This was Mrs. Sproule's anonymous communication, couched in her own language but in the handwriting of Ciruelas. It tore to shreds the reputation of poor Dolores, Lola's mother, and taxed her with the sin which was in fact but half her own. There was absolutely nothing to allege against our heroine herself. The worst that could be said was, that she was base-born, ill-bred, mannerless, entirely without education or the accomplishments of a lady. As for the girl's personal charms, which might explain a lover's infatuation, they were really mediocre; at least such beauty as she possessed was coarse, vulgar and unrefined. The writer wound up by declaring that the whole affair was nothing less than a barefaced attempt to entrap Mr. Wriottesley into a most undesirable match.

As Frank took in the whole infamy of this miserable production, his indignation passed all bounds. But after the first outburst he began to consider how he might detect the perpetrator. It was clear that its author owed him a grudge; yet Frank could not remember that at the time this letter was written, he was on bad terms with any living soul. Bellota was the only man with whom he had quarreled; but the old man could never have stooped to pen lines which stigmatized himself and his belongings in such unmeasured terms. Moreover, the writer was unmistakably English. The language was idiomatic and pure. And so by degrees the issue was narrowed, but the puzzle became more perplexing than ever. Few if any of his brother officers were *au courant* with his love affairs; none knew that he had ever thought of making this Spanish girl his wife. Who,

then, among English-speaking friends could have served him so ill a turn?

It is, doubtless, in the experience of many, that, after long struggling with an abstruse problem, we come all at once, by some occult process, right upon the clew. We cannot explain how or why; it is simply an inspiration, a revelation. Some such sudden solution came upon Frank while he taxed his brains to discover the author of this treacherous epistle.

"It must have been Mrs. Sproule. She alone was in possession of all the facts of the case."

Frank well remembered her aversion to Lola, her out-spoken dislike of the whole affair. He knew her to be a self-opinionated, meddlesome woman, who would consider any indisposition to be guided by her advice as a personal affront. She had been offended, of course, by Frank's contempt for her entreaties, and with thoughtless wickedness—he could not bring himself to believe that her crime had any other origin than petulant disappointment—had allowed herself to drift into this despicable revenge. But the discovery was a shock to him.

For the remainder of the voyage, at night in his berth, by day when he paced the deck alone, brooding over his wrong, one sole idea possessed his mind—the desire to have it out with Mrs. Sproule. When at length he landed, almost without pausing to deposit his belongings in the barracks, he went on to the Garden of Eden and asked to see the lady of the house.

Mrs. Sproule was at home alone, spick and span as usual, and in the manner of her reception to Frank, cordial, even affectionate. They were such old friends, you see; no one—least of all Tony Sproule—could find fault with her greeting. Perhaps she was sweet and kind because she wished to conceal her feelings. She knew she had done Frank a serious injury, and she liked him none the better for that.

"Mr. Wriottesley!" she cried, springing from her seat. "Have you dropped from the skies? When did you arrive?"

"An hour ago, by the mail."

"And you come at once to see me! This is quite touching," she said with a gay smile.

"I wanted to talk to you at once on serious business."

"To inquire the present price of coffins I presume, and order one for yourself. At least your face is long enough."

"Perhaps I have good reasons for being serious."

"No bad news, I hope? Nothing has happened?" She meant it to appear that she was only solicitous on his account; he felt convinced she was uneasy on her own. "Your uncle?"

"Is well—so far as I know."

"Mr. Wriottesley, surely you have not quarreled with him?"

"We parted in anger."

"What madness! with such prospects as yours."

"I should never have fallen out with him but for the treachery of so-called friends," said Frank, slowly, looking her straight in the face. But he quite failed to stare her out of countenance. Another woman standing by would have detected a slight tremor in Mrs. Sproule's hands.

"The quarrel is not, I trust, beyond the hope of reconciliation? Might one ask the cause of misunderstanding?"

"It can hardly be necessary, Mrs. Sproule; you must know it already."

"Upon my word, Mr. Wriottesley, you cannot be in your senses. I really must ask you to explain."

"Let me call your attention to this letter, which my uncle sent on to me before I left England."

And he proceeded, with slow emphasis, to read to Mrs. Sproule the words she herself had composed.

"There, madam; I think you have reason to be proud of the production, for that this is your handiwork, you will hardly, I presume, deny?"

"Really, Mr. Wriottesley, you are going too far. I cannot suffer you to come here and insult me to my face."

"I trust I shall never forget the respect which is due to a lady; but have you not, Mrs. Sproule, quite put yourself out of court?"

"My husband will protect me. If he were here you would not dare—"

"I will wait till he comes, and repeat to him all I have said. Not that I have said much; not one tithe of what such conduct richly deserves."

"I think you must be mad, Mr. Wriottesley."

"Do you mean to deny all knowledge of this letter?" cried Frank, holding it out and watching her face intently.

Would she add falsehood to her former treachery? For a moment Frank hesitated. She bore his scrutiny so bravely. Her eyes never faltered; her air was that of a martyr at the stake, resigned, sorrowful, but without reproach. Could it be possible he was mistaken? The evidence was presumptive only. What if he suspected her unjustly?

But no: he could not absolve her; the blame was clearly hers.

"You cannot answer me," he went on.

"What would it serve me if I denied the charge again and again? With a man so unreasonable, it would be mere waste of breath to protest."

"O Mrs. Sproule! what could have induced you to play such a

shabby trick as this? Was this what I had a right to expect from a friend? To stab me in the dark, to sow seeds of discord in my uncle's breast, to injure an innocent child with your foul calumny—O Mrs. Sproule! it was a mean, a dirty trick to play."

"I disdain to listen further. You have no right to call me to account. If I were not defenseless you would not dare to use such language to me. But my husband shall hear of it; he will—"

"Yes, my precious, that he will—but what?" said Tony Sproule himself. "Frank Wriottesley!" he added at once. "This is good for sore eyes: what cheer?"

Frank took no notice of his outstretched hand.

"I have come here, Captain Sproule, only to tell you and your wife a piece of my mind."

"Bless me, Frank, how good of you," sneered Sproule. "But that's your way; you're always doing kind things."

"He only came here to insult me," cried Mrs. Sproule, "with unjustifiable aspersions, and in language that no lady could listen to without loss of self-respect."

"Is this true, Mr. Wriottesley? May I request you to explain?"

"It means this, Captain Sproule, that you are a despicable pair, and from my heart I regret that I ever knew you."

"Oh ho! I am included then. I thought it was only Janita that you wished to insult. You are braver than I thought. I can defend myself, and I warn you, Mr. Wriottesley, to have a care."

"Sproule, I know things about you which, if made public, would show you up in your true light."

"Make them public. No one would believe such a soft-headed fool."

"What took you to my stable the night before the Maiden race?"

"I can't remember now. To see the Bat bedded down, I suppose, if you must know."

"At three o'clock in the morning?"

"It's false! I never left my house after eleven that night."

"Jeffries saw you go in as Pepe came out. The horse was physicked, and you knew it; but you never thought of telling me."

"Pshaw! man; you're dreaming." But Sproule for all his brazen impudence could not look Frank in the face.

"Mr. Wriottesley is out of his mind, Tony. It really is not safe to be with him."

"Thank you, madam. I am sane enough to see through you now. As for Captain Sproule, you and I must henceforth be

strangers, and I do not promise that I will not put others on their guard against you."

"I'll have you up for defamation, as sure as my name's Tony Sproule. But we've had talk enough. I'd rather see your back. If you're going, go."

"It is the last time you will see me under your roof."

"*Tant mieux!*" said Mrs. Sproule.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BY RIGHT OF CAPTURE.

THIS debt to his conscience discharged, Frank hurried down the hill, not sorry that his acquaintance with the Sproules was closed forever.

He went next to Rosia Cottage. He was determined to see Lola at once, by fair means or foul, and put an end to the miserable uncertainty that surrounded his suit. Lady Henriette's promise to intercede for them had not given him much hope. Don Mariano had already spoken so positively, that there was little chance of a change in his sentiments. And, in truth, Frank was tired of begging and praying. No; if the grandfather was still obstinately determined to reject his suit, Frank was resolved to marry Lola without his consent. He would carry her off, he said. Whither? Anywhere, he would have replied when asked; adding perhaps, if pressed, that one place would do as well as another. Sweden was a good place to go to; and so was Nova Scotia, the Canary Islands, Havana, or the Phillipines. In South America, again, there would be a good opening, Spanish emigrants went thither in crowds; and he, with Lola by his side, might commence a new life. They would make a fortune, and return by and by to snap their fingers at Bellota and Sir Hector.

But now he was near the cottage. It seemed uninhabited. He rang the bell; rang and rang and rang again. No answer.

There were no neighbors within call; the cottage stood by itself in its own strip of garden, and the nearest house was distant a hundred yards or more. The garden-wall was not high; once or twice before he had scaled it without difficulty; why not climb over again and spy out for himself the secret of this mysterious silence?

With two bounds he had made good his burglarious entrance. How well he knew the place! The long covered passage that led from the hall-door to the gate, framed in with hanging passion-flowers and Virginia-creepers; the garden-plots, narrow

in size, but in season rich with their profuse wealth of southern blossom; the beds of wild geranium, of heliotrope and carnation, the blue plumbago, the crimson-leaved lobelia, and the roses without end. This was where, in days past, Lola had walked, and mused perhaps of him. Now it was deserted, lonely; no living soul seemed to have sojourned here for weeks at least.

By this covered passage Frank passed on to the hall-door to renew his summons. Still no answer. It was now quite evident that no one occupied the house. Loath to abandon his investigation too hastily he went round to the back of the house. This having proved equally fruitless, he returned to the front garden, and was preparing to leave as he had entered, when he heard the key turning in the lock of the front gate. This opened and gave admission to old Bellota himself.

The old man halted suddenly and turned pale. He was not the man to submit tamely to be robbed. What he owned he held; that had been his motto always. He would surrender nothing now without a struggle. It was broad daylight; there were houses not very far off, barracks, guards, soldiers and patrols passing to and fro—some one would certainly come to his assistance if he could gain time and make sufficient outcry.

His tongue was therefore loosened, and he uttered a loud shrill cry for *socorro!*—help! If to this a second and third had followed, Frank might have found himself in custody on a charge of house-breaking, with appearances very much against him. To silence Bellota was now his first object, and this he accomplished by seizing the old man's arm and shaking him rather roughly.

"*Calla!*" he cried; "be quiet."

The tone in which he spoke made any threats unnecessary. Bellota, trembling in every limb, gave himself up for lost.

"What have you done with her?" was Frank's first query; and with it came the first glimmering of light into Bellota's bewildered brain.

"Who and what are you?"

"Do you not recognize my face? My name is Wriottesley; you ought to know it!"

"Ah!" screamed Don Mariano, livid now with rage. "Know you? *Por vida de todos los santos*—by the life of all the saints I shall never forget you, black-souled youth. Hast returned then, evil-visaged scoundrel—whom God confound—returned to be again a thorn in my side? What fiend tempted you to cast your roving eyes on my Lolita, the priceless pearl of my heart? Were there then no brazen, shameless dames of your own nation and blood to take your cursed fancy, that you must needs

fasten your eyes on my precious jewel? When the wolf enters the fold it is bad indeed for him that has but one sheep. But my lamb is safe still, thank Heaven!—safe from your vile corrupting clutches."

"Tell me where she is, or I will do you some serious mischief," cried Frank, almost beside himself.

"Not if you hacked me to pieces, bit by bit; not though a single word might save me from instant death. Do your worst, I am old and feeble and in your power. You show your courage truly in assaulting such as me."

A hot blush sprang to Frank's cheek as he realized the cowardliness of threats or violence against this defenseless old man.

"I beg your pardon—I was to blame. But why do you exasperate me, Don Mariano? Tell me, I beseech you, tell me where is Dolores?"

"That you may go to her forthwith, and lure her on to her ruin? Never; by the soul of my mother, never!"

"Then I will find her as I did before. You cannot hope to keep us apart forever."

"Try your best, fair sir. This time she is in a secure place I trust, and quite beyond your reach."

He spoke bravely, and yet a certain terror seized him lest perchance the cousins at Agua Dulce might play him false; lest all his precautions might prove vain before the fierce energy of Frank's pursuit. Therefore, the moment he had dismissed our hero from the cottage, he sought out a messenger to hurry off to the *cortijo* and put its occupants on their guard. The yellow-haired Englishman had returned, and, like Satan, he was let loose to roam the world and work his wicked will.

Frank was certainly not disposed to let the grass grow under his feet. But at first he was a little doubtful how to proceed. Had her grandfather removed Lola to a distance, or was Lola really still on the rock? Hardly the latter. There would be too much risk; some news of her place of concealment would be certain to come to her lover's ears. If then, at a distance,—where? At Agua Dulce? That again seemed improbable, because it was there obviously that the first inquiries for her would be made. Still there was a chance that these cousins might know something of her whereabouts, and that for a solid consideration one or other of the family might be induced to reveal the clew.

Thus ruminating, Frank came to his quarters in barracks, which he had not visited since his return. His servant had already got his room ready—a little den of a place, yet home-like, and peopled by his many possessions, all of which seemed

old familiar friends. There was his lathe and his carpenter's chest, his many whips, his bats, his spurs, a racing-saddle carefully covered over with a cloth, one or two pictures, a photograph of a lady in a mantilla which had a vague resemblance to Lola, and the heads of two ibexes which he had shot upon the mountains above Estepona; on the floor, by his small camp-bed, lay a moorish rug which he had brought from Tetuan; on his barrack-table was a Spanish blanket or *manita* of brilliant stripes with a fringe of red woven worsted balls.

His portmanteau was unpacked; clothes were laid out, his bath was filled, and Frank was preparing to don his uniform as an official notification of his return from leave, when a budget of letters laid out ostentatiously on the mantel-piece caught his eye.

Looking over them rather carelessly, unsealing a few; apostrophizing this as a dun, and that as a reminder which could well afford to wait, he came upon a funny dirty-looking billet, and in among the black thumb-marks and tobacco-stains could just decipher that it was addressed to him in an unmistakable Spanish hand. There was neither stamp nor post-mark. Evidently it had been delivered by a private messenger.

Frank tore it open and read in English:

"I am here close-guarded at the *cortijo*; come to me, my sweet; come quickly, or I shall know not what to do.

"L."

From DOLORES!

This was the letter which Miguel had managed to smuggle out from Agua Dulce and forward by a friendly *arriero* bound to the Plaza or great fortress town. It had upon Frank the effect of a match to a mine.

With his usual vigor, he made all necessary arrangements for a journey into Spain. Muldoon was told to saddle Taraxicum, the big-boned dun horse; to fasten on the wallets; pack the saddle-bags with their usual kit; see that the picketing-rope was sound; roll the horse-rug and make it secure over the saddle-bow.

A second horse, Macho, which had often carried Mrs. Sproule, was to be got ready later on and sent with a side-saddle to Long Stables, not far from Ximena town. Frank went to Montegriffo, the well-known job-master of the Rock, to obtain the service of some homeward returning Spaniard to escort the horse thus far. There too he changed a handful of English notes—he was still in funds—into Spanish gold, securing the coins in a belt around his waist. Less than an hour sufficed

to see him mounted and trotting sharply down the Waterport Street on his way to the Spanish Lines.

He had not waited to exchange greetings with any of his brother officers. Few of them knew he had returned; they would learn it perhaps from the Sproules, or see his name in the "Evening Chronicle" amidst the list of passengers by the mail. He was still on leave of absence; there was no need for him to enter into explanations of his hasty expedition into Spain. All that would keep till he should return to make final arrangements for retiring from the service.

He had often journeyed by this road before, but never on such an eager mission as now. The day was hot and sultry; the wind, which had long prevailed from the west, had gone suddenly round to the east. A boon this to the fleet of crafts of all rigs and sizes, which for weeks had lain becalmed on the Mediterranean side of the Rock, and which were now under full sail—a slow and stately regatta—making good their passage of the Straits. But to Frank it was an annoyance, for the Levanter or easterly wind, had turned the firm, hard sands of "the Beach" into a soft slushy quagmire, over which his horse could crawl only at a snail's pace. And when he had gained the open plain towards the first Venta, he found the ground dried so hard as to forbid fast traveling. Not until he had entered beneath the welcome shade of the cork-wood of Almoraima, and found the turf spring under his horse's feet, could he press on as fast as he could wish. Within the forest a solemn stillness reigned; save for his echoing hoofs, you might have heard the crackle of a bough or the fall of a leaf, except when the far-off tinkle of a bell announced the whereabouts of a herd of lazy kine, or the approach of a string of beasts of burden treading hopefully along their weary road.

In the midst of the wood, at Long Stables, he halted to bait and rest his horse for half an hour; he wished, too, to provide for the accommodation of Macho, his second horse, which might be expected to arrive that night. As curiosity might be aroused at the appearance of a side-saddle, he explained that he was going on to Ronda to meet some friends coming south from Madrid, and that Macho was for one, an English lady, to ride. Then he pressed on to the *cortijo*, and came in sight of it as the sun was declining and the laborers in the hedgeless fields were driving home their asses and patient oxen.

Frank had not quite settled his plans. At first he thought of riding straight to the house, and, asking openly to see her, leave all the rest to chance. But would they admit him? He might be recognized. Ramona and Miguel knew of his relations with Lola; the others by this time were perhaps equally well-in-

formed. Without some friendly assistance he could hardly hope to succeed. But whom could he trust? Yet some one must have helped Lola to the extent of sending the note he had received. Ay! but which?—Ramona, Alejandro, Miguel?

These thoughts fully occupied his mind as, with much circumspection, he approached the out-buildings of the farm. He had passed by the principal entrance, and went towards the gate-way leading into the *corral* behind. Here he dismounted, as the lintel was low, and leading his horse, entered the yard in spite of the ominous growls of a big Estramaduran dog. Almost at once from the neighborhood of the straw-shed some one came hurriedly towards him. It was Miguel.

"I thought I knew you, señor mio. What brings you hither thus openly? you must be mad."

"Are you friend or foe?"

"I am her only friend."

"If you will but remain so, you shall never repent it. But tell me, how is Lola?"

"She is suffering: she fears you have forgotten her; it will give her new strength to hear that you are close at hand. But, sweet señor of my heart, do not linger here; you will be discovered, and then some fresh misfortune will assuredly overtake her. Come away, come away;" and Miguel led the way out of the *corral* again and back into the lane that led up to the house.

"How can I go till you tell me more?" Frank said, as he reluctantly accompanied Miguel. "At least let me know where we may meet after dark, and talk without fear of interruption."

"I am almost a prisoner myself. Lucas, my brother, suspects, I think, that I shall play him false, that Lola has my sympathy. If he were to see us together, all would be lost. Go then, señor; do not delay a moment. There is a terrible risk—ay, *Dios mio!*"

The sudden appearance at the front of the house of Lucas, issuing from the great doors under the stone coat of arms, accounted for this exclamation. Miguel's teeth fairly chattered with fright.

"The *caballero* is a friend of yours, my Miguelito, no?" said Lucas, courteously. "In what can we serve him. This house is his, he knows."

"He has come to buy stock. He is from—"

"*Igualeja*," said Frank, hoping by his slouched soft hat and altered voice to escape recognition for a time.

"It is late: I tell him to return on the morrow."

"You are right: such few *potros* (steeds) as we possess are better seen in the full light of day. Only ill weeds shun the sun."

"*Mil gracias!* At an early hour in the morning you shall see me again. Good-day!"

"One moment, señor mio. My horses are famous I know, but tell me who recommended you here?"

"I have seen many and heard much of the Agua Dulce breed."

"Have you never visited the *cortijo*?"

Miguel moved off uneasily and entered the house. There was no doubt in his mind that Lucas suspected Frank.

"I came once with other friends."

"From Gibraltar, no?" Then seeing Frank hesitated, he added, "It is too late. You cannot longer disguise yourself from me. I know you. *Vaya usted con dios.*"

"Stay! if you know me, you know my object in coming hither."

"*Uno y no mas, Señor san Blas.* One word with you is more than enough. I will parley with you no longer. The sleeping fox does not find a fowl inside him at dawn. I am wide-awake when there is danger abroad, or ought to be gained."

"There is no danger, but a prospect of much gain, if you will but listen to that which I would propose."

"Come to the gain then quickly."

"A young lady is detained here against her will. Help me but to speak with her—"

"This to my face!" cried Lucas in a sudden access of fury.

"I had thought that perhaps a handful of golden *onsas*—"

"This to me! to Lucas Halagueño Jesualdo Peñaflor! Foul coin offered as a bribe to betray his relatives and his sacred trust! Begone!"

Frank's brusqueness in making this proposal was ruinous. If approached with becoming mystery and circumlocution, through accredited agents, ignoring the real gist of the treaty, Lucas might have been prevailed to sell himself and all those nearest and dearest to him at Agua Dulce. A Spaniard such as he has no instinctive dislike to a bribe. Ministers of State will even accept them, provided the dose be artfully given.

Years ago a petitioner approached a certain general who just then ruled the roast at Madrid, and offered him a handsome sum in cash as the price of a particular favor. General — indignantly refused; more, he promptly sent off an aide-de-camp to call the petitioner out. Another gentleman, better versed in the processes of corruption, prepared his request by sending to the general's stable a priceless pair of steeds as a token of esteem. He immediately obtained the concession for which he prayed.

"Begone!" repeated Lucas. "I cannot admit such insults; only an insolent, indecent, presuming English dog would try to tamper with any *caballero* of a family so old and honored as ours."

"If I go, it will be to the alcalde of Ximena. I know the law. You cannot retain Dolores; you cannot, you know. Neither you nor Don Mariano can refuse her to me if we are both resolved."

"She is not here. If she were, you should not see her, not to save your soul from everlasting fire."

"I tell you I will," answered Frank, peremptorily. "Not you, nor a better man, shall oblige me to leave this spot till I have seen and spoken with Dolores. Let me pass," went on our hero, and he advanced upon Lucas as if to force an entrance to the house. The man quailed and shouted for help. He was powerfully built and not wanting in courage. Could his fingers but have closed upon a knife, he would have made short work of his assailant, but a hand-to-hand fight, strength against strength, with nature's weapons, was not in his line; and after a very short struggle Frank threw him to the ground.

By this time the noise of the scuffle, and Lucas's repeated cries for assistance had brought out a number of people from the farm offices and the house itself. Doña Teresa came soon, and with her Ramona. Both shrieked at the sight of Lucas prostrate beneath the tall figure of the strange intruder. In the excitement Lola was overlooked; and she too, free for the moment to move where she pleased, came to the door-way, curious and surprised.

Uttering a half-hysterical cry of joy, as she caught sight of *Paco* she threw herself into his arms.

But the moment was one for action. Frank, rising to the emergency, cried:

"Quick, quick, Lolita; jump up behind," and sprang into his saddle. Lola, with all her faculties tense-strung, realizing the supreme moment, gave him her hand and was quickly lifted on to the horse. In her early youth, she had often ridden thus, *a las ancas*, as it is called, and the position was not new to her. She grasped Frank tightly by the waist and prepared to hold on even at racing speed.

"Sit firm!" cried Frank, as he dug the spurs into *Taraxicum* and started off at score.

So far fortune had favored the lovers. But Frank was single-handed, and the enemy was growing stronger every instant. Lucas, too, had regained his feet. The lane leading from the *cortijo* was long and narrow, margined with a hedge of aloes and prickly pears, through which it was impossible to break and gain the open country. It was necessary to traverse the whole length of the lane; but *Taraxicum* was going admirably in spite of his double load. There was a long tail of pursuers; but as they fell off one by one, all might have been well had not the fugitives

encountered a flock of goats trooping up towards the *cortijo*. Frank was compelled to slacken his pace, or his horse might have been thrown down.

And now those behind shouted to the goatherds, "Seize him! *Aguantalo!* lay hands upon him!—Thief! Brigand! Assassin!

Before Frank could disengage himself from the crowd, a man sprang to each side of his horse's head. To these in a few seconds were added others, and soon he was torn from the saddle and stretched senseless at his horse's feet.

CHAPTER XXX.

A CLEAN PAIR OF HEELS.

IT will be remembered that when Frank Wriottesley left so suddenly for England, his old servant, Pepe, was awaiting trial for wounding with intent to kill. In due course he was arraigned, found guilty, and sentenced. The fiat of the law was that he should spend seven years as a convict in the Gibraltar prison.

Pepe had been in durance before in Spain for months and months, but never with any great discomfort to himself. The hours were a trifle long perhaps, but they were idle; and an Andaluz who may be idle is half happy. Prison discipline was unknown in the small country gaols he patronized, and he had been allowed to lounge unchecked the livelong day against the barred windows and gossip with his friends outside. Smoking was not forbidden, and a very small command of capital sufficed to keep him well supplied with the weed. So long as he had cigarettes in plenty and genial conversation, Pepe had been content to let the world revolve. When the day of release arrived, he passed the gates not without regret, and certainly without recollections of the prison enough unpleasant to deter him from risking a return.

But at Gibraltar he found himself in a place of a different sort. This new experience indeed was about the most irksome of all the adverse chances that had hitherto befallen him in his short but checkered career. They treated him so strangely. They cut his hair close; they made him wash himself from head to foot and wear clean clothes; there was a priest who preached at him, and school-masters who forced him to learn to read and write; he was obliged to obey orders, to march like a soldier, to rise and lie down at regular hours, to keep silence, to forego tobacco; above all, for six days in the week to work, and work right

hard. Sooner than endure this constant toil he would have gladly faced starvation upon the open mountain slopes, or fought for his food with pigs and beasts of the field. Daily at dawn they marched him, guarded by loaded muskets, to far-off quarries, where, with a crowd of felon associates, he labored continuously with pick, shovel, and jumper, or in man-harness with tackle and fall, till, when night approached, weak and exhausted, his hands torn and bleeding, his spirits cowed and his courage gone, he wished that he were dead. With half-hearted efforts he strove to perform his allotted task, and when he failed, as fail he generally did, he met the uncompromising reproaches of his stern masters, or the baleful eyes of his companions, who glowered at him or swore with coarse gibes that he shirked his share of the general toil. Often—how often!—did he gaze hopelessly across the Bay, now smooth as burnished silver, now black and angry as his own heart, and pant to be once more free. But there was no hope—no hope! seven summers yet to run, scorching up the marrow in his bones, seven winters searching all his joints with icy blasts, and through all their dreary round no glimmer of hope or change. It seemed to him a life-time. When seven years were passed, his hair would be gray, his mother dead, Frank Wriottesley removed far beyond the reach of his revenge. This filled his cup. Must, then, all his hideous wrongs be patiently endured without a prospect of repayment in kind? Did the proverb lie which said that there was no debt which would not some day be paid, no term that would not in the long run be fulfilled? Was there no justice in heaven, as there seemed to be none on earth? This one gnawing dread that he might never settle accounts with Frank intensified all his sufferings, and nerved him to face all dangers, to be once more free—if only for the hour needed to plunge his knife into Frank Wriottesley's heart.

He soon found that he was not the only desperate man among his fellows; that there were others as ready as he to stake their lives against liberty. It was a cosmopolitan collection of rogues herded together in this Gibraltar prison; to the pick of English ruffianism was added the scum of local society; Spanish smugglers rubbed shoulders with garroters from Whitechapel; a Greek sailor, sentenced to "life" for manslaughter, had for chum a burglar, notorious for his skill in picking patent locks; Moorish pirates from the Riff coast worked cheek by jowl with educated forgers, and the well-bred actors in the most noted *causes célèbres* of recent times.

It might be expected that these complex elements, seething thus together as in some witches' caldron, might any day bubble over and burst with a terrible explosion; yet, for the most

part, the steel front of inflexible discipline kept them within bounds. Against it this infamy might battle fruitlessly, with only certain detriment to itself. These rogues could not be true to one another. They schemed, often cleverly enough; but the fertile brains amongst them, though quick-witted and ready in resource, could not inspire that unity of action which alone could give them strength to assail the firm organization that held them in check.

Thus it was that failure—which to those more experienced seemed inevitable—overtook the first plot into which Pepe threw himself with feverish eagerness soon after his first committal to the prison. The scheme had originated with a certain convict called French Jack, a dexterous villain, quick to devise, but without the heart to execute. Had he been as courageous as he was clever, he might have been a shining light in the world of finance, with broad possessions and a spotless name. There was a daring simplicity in Jack's proposal now, that the convicts in the Europa quarry should rise *en masse* just at evening, kill their keepers, and make off with the boats across the Bay, trusting to the darkness to evade pursuit and reach the Spanish soil, on which they would be safe. All the details had been carefully planned, the stations assigned by French Jack—he himself was to be coxswain of the leading boat—and at a given signal the massacre was to commence. The authorities, it seemed, were entirely off their guard. No whisper of the intended rising had got abroad; all promised well for the mutineers.

The morning dawned; as usual the gangs marched down to the quarries, headed by a small military guard. As they tramped along the narrow pathway at the foot of the rocks, the hearts of most were joyful within them; this morning was the last on which they would go forth to hateful labor; ere nightfall all would be free.

Stay! what is that column of smoke rising from near the quarry? The steam of the tug, no doubt, which took the stone-laden barges to and fro. And that line of flashing light along the roadway above the cliff? The bayonets of a regiment marching out to early drill.

False conjectures! The smoke is from the funnels of a man-of-war moored broadside on to the quarry; the bayonets belong to strong additional guards stationed at commanding points, above, below, and all about the place.

The plot was discovered! Some one had turned traitor. Some one—but whom? Every man distrusted his neighbor; and then, as the blame was thrown backwards and forwards, and each in turn denied his guilt, by some strange concurrence of opinion suspicion fastened upon Pepe, the newest arrival

and the least likely to defend himself from the charge. Maddened already by disappointment, the *sotto voce* threats and scowls of undying hate that met him on every side drove him nearly wild, and, half in despair, half in terror, he rushed to the sea and threw himself in. Death he hoped would be his fate rather than re-capture—death, whether from drowning or from the hail of bullets that “ping, pinged” upon the water as he swam away.

But they caught him, loaded him with chains, and clothed him in a dress of dice-board pattern, so that he looked like a harlequin in a suit of yellow and dirty drab. He was moved, too, to another quarry high up the Rock, far away from the element which had led him into temptation before. Blinded by passionate remorse and goaded on by despair, Pepe now more than ever cursed Frank Wriottesley for bringing him to this. But not the less did he brood over escape. He was resolved now to act alone. He could be loyal to himself he thought, but could trust no other living soul. Secretly he prepared a disguise from the blankets of his hammock, working in the dead of night, with thread made from oakum and for needle a bit of rusty wire. Several times he wore this blanket suit under his convict clothes, and went to his daily work hoping for a chance to slip away unobserved. Perhaps the morning of opportunity might one day have dawned; but while he was waiting in patient hope, his keepers took him suddenly and searched him, and came upon the tell-tale disguise. A jealous friend had discovered his secret and betrayed him.

Overwhelmed with despair, he was compelled to yield. But just when he had altogether abandoned hope, chance brought the prospect of success quite unexpectedly within his reach.

One day in the Viney quarry a great mass of overhanging rock slipped from its place and came tumbling down with a terrible crash. Intense confusion followed; many of those who worked below were seriously injured; the warders and guards for the moment thought only of succoring the wounded. Pepe profited by the opportunity, jumped up and ran for his life—ran straight up the road to the Windmill Hill.

It was July. Few people were about, the blazing sun beat down straight upon the straw sun-shades of the sentries and blinded them. Pepe, unperceived, reached the hill near the married soldiers' quarters. To lay hands upon clothes hanging out to dry was his first act, and thus disguised, with a colored handkerchief wound about his head, he walked quietly across the open parade ground and made for Monkey's Cave, by the “Hole in the Wall.” Here, on the back of the Rock at midday, he met no one, and passing rapidly down by the stony path,

climbed over a low parapet at the end, and lowered himself into the branches of a fig-tree that reached up towards the battery from a chink in the rocks below, where foot of man perhaps had never trod. Just then he heard the crash of a cannon right over his head. It was the signal-gun, announcing a convict's escape.

The bloodhounds were after him now. Would they track him hither? He clambered on and on, winning his way with infinite toil and in momentary peril of destruction till night overtook him and he was compelled to halt till daylight. For the moment he was safe from pursuit; but his life was hanging by a thread. He held on grimly, but his foothold was not secure; the failure of a twig or the looseness of a stone, and he must have fallen hundreds of feet down in the depths of the shark-haunted Mediterranean.

Thus he waited through the weary night-watches, and at the first streak of dawn renewed his perilous journey. He would make for Catalan Bay; perhaps there during the night he might steal a boat and reach in safety the Spanish shore. Throughout the whole of the second day he clambered slowly on. As he dragged his worn-out frame from point to point, he hoped that if any spied his progress they might mistake him for one of the monkeys that at times infest the loftiest crags and pinnacles of the Rock. Before nightfall he had reached the great sandbreccia that raises itself above the village of Catalan Bay; this last descent was seemingly easy, but as he slid down his pace increased, till he fell senseless.

When he regained consciousness he found himself on the beach, and just in front of him was a boat bobbing up and down in the gentle ripple of the tideless wave. Could he reach it unobserved? Sentries kept watch even here upon this detached outpost of the giant Rock. They were on the alert; already one had challenged a passing shadow with a peremptory "Halt! who goes there?" making Pepe's heart beat wildly.

With noiseless step, and stooping figure he crept slowly towards the sea. Would not the splash of his body in the water betray him? The sentry's beat was a long one; Pepe waited till he had turned to walk away, then with a sudden bound he made good his footing on board the boat. To cast loose was the work of a second; and then he drifted away, whither? There were no oars; neither mast nor sail; the rudder was unshipped, and Pepe knew he might be carried back into the very jaws of danger. Had he known how strongly the currents hereabouts set to the Atlantic he might have spared himself many anxious hours. As it was, each moment seemed to bring him nearer re-capture. At one time he was within rifle-shot of the

sentries, and might have fared badly had he not remembered to answer "Fishing boat No. 20," when challenged. At another the current swept him round the Europa point towards the Mole, and he seemed heading hopelessly towards the prison house from which he had so recently escaped. Then again the cockleshell was carried out to sea, up and down, backwards and forwards, till Pepe felt certain that at daybreak his position would be plain to the watchers at the signal-station, and all hope at an end.

A prey thus to the bitterest alternations of hopes and fears, it was long before he realized that he was in truth half way across the Bay. Yet before daylight came, his boat was high and dry upon the sands not far from Cabrita Point, and he was really free. Upon the opposite shore was the Rock, the fortress he had so recently left, lying only half-awake, winking and blinking at him with hundreds of eyes as the sun glinted upon its window-panes and glittering guns.

Pepe shook his fist at his old enemy, and swore a big oath that never again would he set foot on English soil. He was a Spaniard in Spain; the English law was powerless to touch him now. He was free; yes, free as air and about as empty. Now when the great excitement of his prolonged escape was ended, he remembered that for at least two days he had not tasted food. He was penniless; nearly in rags. What matter? Well versed in all the shifts of a nomad life, he dug up the first aloe he found, and gnawed some sustenance from its stringy roots; then passing an orchard of prickly pears, helped himself plentifully to the saponaceous fruit, and choosing a green spot by a babbling stream, sat down to refresh himself and think over his future plans.

At first the strange sensation of absolute freedom from restraint, the knowledge that no one watched him, that no one was on his track, that he need never do another stroke of work, but might lie there upon his back and idle all his hours away—took possession of him to the exclusion of all other thoughts. His head was turned by the delicious certainty of liberty; he was intoxicated, oblivious, careless what might happen next. So he dozed on, lulled by the tranquil scene and the rushing waters, till, sinking off to sleep, he dreamed that he was once more in a punishment cell, safe under lock and key.

With a start he woke and sprang to his feet. The sun was now high in the heavens. He had better be moving on. Algéciras was not far distant, he would beg there a little food, and then make his way to Puente Mayorga, seeking refuge in his mother's hut. The journey was tedious; there were two rivers to cross, and as he could not pay the toll at the ferries, he had

to struggle higher up the course, where he found fords and waded over. It was near sun-down when the foot-sore, ragged vagrant came in sight of the high arch of the Mayorga bridge, and few of those he met recognized in him the impish Pepe Picarillo who had once called this hamlet his home.

"Whom seek you?" they asked.

"My poor mamma!" He was as piteous as a babe deserted on a door-step.

"And which princess of all these palaces hard by is the proud possessor of such a ragged rogue as you?"

"Ragged or in purple, the proverb says that a good drinker is often covered by a tattered cloak."

"By what title, then, is Her Highness your mother known?"

"She is the Tia Josefija, and I am Pepe Picarillo, her son."

"She has gone, she lives here no longer."

"Gone! without a word. Can none of the neighbors tell me where she may be found?"

One thought she might be found at Marbella; another said she had gone to Los Barrios. She was in the hospital at Algeciras—in gaol—dead. Did any of them care?

Nor for the matter of that did Pepe. He had been emancipated from maternal control for many years, and could rub along without her now. His only object in seeking her was to exercise his right as the stronger, making her support him, now that he was grown to man's estate, in a life of dignified ease. But Josefa had disappeared, and Pepe began to realize that he must work for himself or starve. Then a whisper from a dark-visaged *contrabandista*, who was on his way to buy tobacco on the Rock, gave him to understand that he might hear of his mother at the Ermita de San Antonio in the Sierra de los Gazules. Her precise employment was not described, but Pepe gathered from the winking eye of his informant that the Ermita was a depot for contraband goods, and that Josefa acted as a sort of care-taker and general servant for the smugglers who made it their home.

After some days of weary wandering Pepe came to the spot indicated. The Ermita was not well known, at least most of those he met pretended that they had not heard of it, while one or two shook their heads and looked twice at Pepe before they answered him.

It stood at the end of a deep *cañon*, a solitary tomb-like building, almost part and parcel of the rocks behind it, and hidden in front and on either side by a tremendous wall. In times past it had served as a refuge for a half a dozen gloomy fanatics who had come hither to tell their beads and whip themselves to death; now its retired position and massive proportions made it a fitting home for the gang of evil-doers with whom Josefa lived.

Pepe knocked loudly several times before he heard the usual "*Quien es?* (Who comes)?" and it was spoken in terms so surly and discouraging that he had hardly the heart to give his answer in due form, "*Gentex de paz*," or peaceful people, feeling that to be inoffensive would no more serve him than it does the lambkin who visits the wolf.

A wicket in the door was opened, and at it appeared a pair of eyes.

"What is your business? This is no convent now; here are no alms to waste on idle rogues who only keep walls from falling."

"I want to see Josefa."

"*Anda!* Be off! There is no Josefa here."

"I am her son."

"That is a matter of another Friday. She may well be proud of you—proud as the hen when it lays an addled egg. But wait; these may be greater lies than a tailor tells. Wait!"

Josefa herself came next.

"Pepito! what evil wind has blown you hither!"

"I am not welcome, it seems."

"About as welcome as dogs at mass."

"I broke prison last week; I am foot-sore, starving; ask them to let me in. They trust you: I will serve them faithfully too."

"As is the bell so is the clapper. The Tia is a lazy, gossiping hag," said the first speaker. "Her mouth is like a basket that won't shut—everything falls out of it. We don't want two of the same breed."

"My son is brave, intelligent, and strong," pleaded Josefa.

"He is not fit for us. Girths chafe the mule that has never carried a saddle. Let him leave off milk and bread, and come again when good food has filled his veins with courage. How could such a ghost play his part with men, *muy hombres*—men indeed?"

"He knows every inch of ground between the two seas." (The Atlantic and the Mediterranean.) "He is fearless as an eight-year old bull."

"Every piece of cloth won't make a sail. He must show what he is worth before we let him live with us."

But without further discussion Pepe was admitted. The door was barred behind him; he crossed a narrow yard badly paved, and entered a room which served as kitchen and for general purposes. It was whitewashed and had a few old chairs; in one corner was a charcoal stove, on the walls one or two gaudy prints representing the martyrdom of San Christobal, a portrait of the Virgin de la Angustia, and of the saints Justina and Rufina, the patronesses of Seville. Four men were round a low table play-

ing cards; they were dressed much alike, in short brown jackets, white shirts, trousers reaching to the knee and gaiters of untanned leather open behind to show the stocking. All carried revolvers in their waists-cloths and enormous Albacete knives.

The principal personage was a scowling man more than six feet tall, much pitted with the small-pox and clean-shaved; in his shirt were silver studs, and on his jacket, breast, and sleeves, rows of hanging silver buttons. He spoke to Pepe.

"Hola! prison-bird, hast thou cheated the hangman and the gallows? Whence come you—from Ceuta or Melilla? How did you escape your chains?"

"I am from La Plaza, from the English prison on the Rock."

"Did not the soldiers send you here to spy us out? Speak truly, or by the life of the Moors, you had better say your prayers."

"I came in search of Josefa, my *mamita*. But I would gladly stay with you and work."

"*A ver*. Let's see first what you can do. But there, you are safe inside; this house is yours, here you can stay—until we let you out, eh Padre Cura?" he said with a laugh to a short stout man having some faint resemblance to a priest, with his close-shaven head and smooth, fat cheeks. The Padre Cura's eyes were dark and restless, his glance shifting, and his attitude that of one forever on the watch.

Of the remaining three, one was called Verdugo (hangman), the other two Señor José and Gabarron. Señor José was a young man of very dark complexion, coal-black eyebrows and mustache, resolute and cruel of aspect; he called himself a political refugee: that is to say, he had served as sergeant in a regiment which "pronounced"—for the wrong person, and Mr. José having killed one or two of his officers, thought it advisable to disappear. Verdugo had never followed the trade which gained him his sobriquet, but had been sentenced once or twice, *en contumacion*, to death. Gabarron was an oldish gentleman, who had once been a farm-laborer, and who thought it promotion to look after the horses at the Ermita, and help Josefa in her household tasks.

Soon after Pepe's arrival came the hour for the evening meal. One dish comprised the whole repast—a wide frying-pan filled with bread-crumbs cooked in oil and on the top small sausages surrounded by squares of fat of pork. The guests squatted round; each with a wooden spoon attacked the dish in turn and at a given signal,—when the chief stuck his spoon in the centre of the stew, all desisted from eating, and a great jar of *priorato*, or Catalonian wine, passed round from hand to hand. When all had drunk, then to it again; and so on alternately till the

frying-pan was empty and the wine was gone. The making of cigarettes wound up the entertainment, each man using his big knife to cut up a morsel of black tobacco which was much like shredding mustard and cress with a mower's scythe. Early in the night all but one on guard had made up their beds on the clay floor and rolled over to sleep.

These rogues with whom Pepe had thrown in his lot were but pettifogging highwaymen after all. They had practiced smuggling most of them, and did a little still in the same line; but trade had not been brisk of late, and they were short of capital to embark in such ventures. So they took to thieving; haunting retired paths, and depriving poor wayfarers of the smallest coins. Hitherto their operations had been but trifling—so inconsiderable, indeed, that the civil guards, the gen-d'armes of Spain, had left them to their own devices. But for some time past, *El Capitano*, as their leading spirit was called, had meditated greater things. He wished to fly at higher game; perchance by one successful *coup* they might get enough to live in ease the remainder of their lives.

He was as daring as he was unprincipled; a man of some education, who had traveled, moreover, and knew men and manners. He had read of the bold acts of the Sicilian Camorra, he knew that in Italy and Greece the profession of brigand was both adventurous and lucrative; he had heard in his own land traditions of José Maria the terror of southern Spain, and of the Siete Niños—the Seven Babes—of Ecija, who had infested the mountains and ravaged Andalusia from end to end. He wished to emulate such deeds. But the neighborhood was poverty-stricken; people of the better class stayed much at home, and there was little hope of rich spoil upon the roads. The only chance lay in inveigling some rich proprietor to a distance from his home; they might carry him off then to the Hermitage, and detain him in peril of his life till a sufficient ransom should be paid. Such things had been done in times past, why not again?

The chief difficulty with the Captain had been to find a suitable victim. In the outlying districts of southern Spain rich men are not to be found on every bush. Pepe's knowledge of the neighborhood was soon turned to account by the Captain. Did he not know some eligible victim? None hereabouts? On the Rock then? No wealthy merchant, no grasping Jew who might be tempted to a distance on the chance of profit, from buying a cheap olive grove or a mountain of minerals? Pepe thought of Bellota; but the old man was too infirm to travel far afield, as of yore, in search of gain. Well, then, went on the Captain, was there no reckless English officer of a roving spirit, whose inquisitiveness took him into far-off corners, whom long

immunity from danger had persuaded that even the loneliest by-paths were secure?

Pepe suddenly remembered Frank Wriottesley. Delightful thought! His former master, whom he so cordially detested, was exactly the person required; he was rich, enormously rich, and could pay almost a king's ransom; that is, if he were to be released at all. Could Pepe keep his hands off him if he fell into his clutches? But perhaps Frank would prove obstinate; perhaps he would refuse to pay a farthing to obtain his freedom. Then perchance back debts might be paid.

But where was Frank to be found? Having been so long incarcerated, Pepe knew nothing of the other's movements. Frank might be in England; he might never now travel into Spain. To gain certain intelligence was obviously the first step.

With this in view Pepe went down to the Cortijo de Agua Dulce. He saw Lucas, who said:

"Well then, idler? In search of bread? take it! Have you turned *pardiasero* (beggar)? We heard you were in jail upon the Rock?"

"No, señor; I am in business now, with a horse-chaunter. I come to do you a good turn."

"The good turn the key does to the thief whom it locks within four walls."

"*Bien*, Señor Don Lucas; then will I take my pigs elsewhere."

"What is your business?"

"We have a horse to sell, one of the purest breeds in Spain. Will your worship come and see him, at the Venta de Hambre Negra?"

"I am an old fox. *Tus, tus*, won't do for me. If I went to the Hambre Negra it would be with a party of *civiles* to give you, and all the house contains, into the hands of the law."

Pepe swore, by the life of god Bacchus, by a tunny-fish salted, that they were honest folk, and sought only to sell their horse to advantage.

"At least tell me, is there no one else to whom you can recommend us?"

"Try your old *amo*—that yellow-faced English officer, who bought my horse the Bat."

"Has he been this way?"

"No," said Lucas—for this meeting which I am describing took place some days before Frank's visit to the farm. But Lola was in the house close guarded, and Lucas half expected that her lover would make some attempt to see her soon.

"I would that I could meet with him; we have accounts to settle yet."

"What would you do with him? Pick his pockets, or worse?"

"I hate him, señor; he has done me a grievous wrong. If I had my will he should suffer the death."

"Bah! Threats do to butter bread with. He is safe from you; you have not heart to touch even a hair of his head."

"Give me but the chance; tell me how and where I may find him, and if I do not hide my knife in his heart, call me forever after a baby and a coward."

He looked so vicious that Lucas felt he was in earnest.

It was because he remembered this that Lucas the moment he recovered from Frank's assault sent off in search of Pepe.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LOLA'S DILEMMA.

WHEN Frank came to himself the sun was down and it was nearly dark. How much time had elapsed since the struggle he had no distinct idea. He rose slowly to his feet and felt himself all over. Still sound in wind and limb; slightly dazed only, his head sore and aching. The blood had congealed upon his forehead, but a little water and some sticking-plaster would soon set that right. There was plenty of diaculum in the medicine-bag; it was stowed away in the right-hand wallet of Taraxicum's saddle.

But where was the horse? Had they taken him? And his other belongings? He searched his pockets. His money was safe and his watch: his sleeve links, and his ring. Stay! on which finger did he wear the ring his darling had given him in London, as a last proof of her plighted troth? It was missing. It must have slipped off his finger in the fight. For her dear sake he searched long and carefully without success.

"She will know some day how I lost it. Though the ring may go, says the proverb, it is well if the finger remains. It might be worse. I am alive and unhurt, and Lola is at hand."

But he must recover his horse; this was indispensable; and therefore he trudged forward as quickly as he could towards the town, meaning to make inquiries and send out thence in search.

He came presently to a little wayside venta, just outside Ximena, and inquired of the landlord, a sour visaged young fellow, who seemed disgusted with Frank's appearance, whether a stray horse had passed that way.

"There have been many stray beasts of all sorts, and men too, this way since dawn. Was your horse a tall horse?"

"Yes; seven palms."

"With a saddle?"

"An English saddle."

"No rider on his back?"

"No."

"His color?"

"Yellow and black points."

"Ah, well, I've not seen him. Go on in God's name."

And Frank, in a rage at time wasted, walked away.

He came next to the wide stream that rattles rapidly over the stones at the foot of the town and halted again to inquire at the mill.

No news whatever of the missing steed.—People seemed suspicious of Frank; they often omitted the ceremonious *usted*—"your worship"—in addressing him, and he felt that somehow he had lost caste. He forgot that his soiled apparel and battered face could hardly inspire respect. Moreover, he was on foot; and to walk is a badge of inferiority in a country where even the beggars ride on horseback.

Foot-sore and weary, he entered the town. Should he proceed at once to the Posada de la Corona, his old quarters? They knew him there well; and just at present Frank preferred to escape observation. So he sat down for a while on a stone bench in the narrow square which served as Alameda or public walk of the town. It was late. Few people were stirring. Now and again a dark figure shrouded in a long *capa* or cloak, slipped rapidly by *en route* for the *reja* or barred window of his lady-love; or the iron-shod feet of pack-animals, heavily-laden, struck noisily upon the stone pavement, waking all the sleeping echoes of the streets. All of these cavalcades Frank narrowly scanned, half expecting to see Taraxicum among them. Nor was he disappointed.

Here was the horse himself, at the end of a long string of mules. An oldish man bestrode the leading beast, kicking it continually with his heels as if to hurry the pace. The rider was evidently anxious to get to his journey's end.

Frank sprang at once to his feet, and followed through many intricacies of the winding streets, till at length they reached a small inn, the doors of which were already closed for the night.

The muleteer knocked. Presently a man appeared at a window with a lantern, and after exchanging a few words, came down and gave admission to the whole party. At Taraxicum's heels Frank also passed in unobserved.

"Tio Mochuelo," said the ostler, "you are late, like the owl whose name you bear."

"Caramba! hours ago should I have reached the town but for this *matvado*, this ugly horse, that led me such a dance."

"A new purchase?"

"No, señor; I got him gratis, for nothing. He was running away, and I caught him like a fish."

"Luck, in truth, is for those it meets, and not for those who go in search of it. Yet this horse had for certain a master. See, he is saddled and equipped after the English fashion. Where, then, is its owner?"

"What care I? who finds, keeps. Hola!" added the muleteer, suddenly catching sight of Frank, at Taraxicum's head. "What cloud has rained you down?"

"I have come for my horse."

"*Cepos quedos*, no more of that. The horse is mine."

"Of that the alcalde shall decide. I can bring proof from the Rock, then at your peril will you keep the horse."

High words might have ensued, but the ostler, anxious for the good name of the house, suggested that the strange gentleman should submit to some test of ownership. Let him say what the wallets and saddle-bags contained. To this the muleteer rather ungraciously consented, growing almost indignant when Frank passed satisfactorily through the ordeal. It was clear that Taraxicum must be surrendered.

However, as a salve to the muleteer, Frank slipped a couple of golden Isabels into his hand; and the whole difficulty was at an end. Nay, as our hero was always ready to lend a helping hand to man, woman, or child, and worked cheerfully to assist in unloading the mules, he and the Tio Mochuelo soon became the fastest friends. They shared suppers, exchanged cigarettes, drank from each other's *botas*, and last of all, settled down together to sleep upon the floor of the stable, their beds being the pack-saddles, and their bed-clothes the coarse red *mantas* belonging to the house.

It was not till next morning, when Frank at the horse-trough was washing off the grimy marks of the previous day, that Tio Mochuelo permitted himself to be inquisitive. He could see now in the broad daylight that Frank was of superior station, doubtless a gentleman—English too, and probably mad.

"How came you to lose your horse, señor *mío*?"

"He threw me; I know no more. When I came to again, he was gone."

"Ah!" said the other, thoughtfully, "and he scratched your forehead with his foot. It's a mercy you were not killed."

Evidently from the old man's tone he did not believe Frank's story; but with that innate good-breeding conspicuous in the better class of Spanish peasants, he forebore to question further. Every man was master of his own affairs; when indisposed to talk, reticence must be respected.

Frank liked the old fellow's looks, and was pleased at his forbearance. Tio Mochuelo—so nicknamed because as an *arriero* he much preferred to travel by night—was a spare, apple-cheeked old man, with white hair and whiskers, but holding himself straight, and seemingly still active as a boy. He had a bright gray eye with a twinkle in it, such as is not uncommon with the Andaluz, who is to Spain what the Irish peasant is to the United Kingdom—a merry jester, ever ready with a quip at anybody's expense.

"Do you travel far to-day, Tio?" asked Frank, tentatively. He was wondering whether he had found an ally.

"These bales of cloth are for Antonio Villamar, who keeps the *mercería* (draper's shop) here in Ximena. I shall load up with charcoal as soon as these are delivered, and return to San Roque."

"Are you always thus upon the road? Where then is your home?"

"At Alcalá. I go once a month to see my family there. My wife, señor *mío*, is sharp-tongued. If you are yourself married you will understand. Marriage is like a melon—all a matter of chance till you try it."

"I lost my wife and my fine horse both on one day," said Frank, quoting a couplet. "'It is the horse only that I regret.'"

"I am delighted to find a kindred spirit," replied Tio Mochuelo. "A wife is to be treated like a dog—the stick in one hand, bread in the other."

"I'll remember your advice. But I am not married; I only wish to be."

"Señor, I will tell you a tale.* Two friends in life promised that the first who died should return to tell the other how he had fared in the world beyond the grave. They both married; presently one died. He came back according to his vow. 'How did you get on?' asked his friend who was still alive. 'Excellent! Saint Peter asked me how I had spent my life. 'I am a poor devil,' I replied, 'who married—' 'Say no more,' replied the Saint; 'all your sins are forgiven you. They are expiated; pass on.' And I am now in glory.' By and by, as time passed our friend upon earth lost his wife. He waited a little, then married again. In due course he too died, and appeared with some assurance before the door-keeper of Heaven. 'How have you spent your life?' inquired His Highness. 'I have been married—twice.' 'Begone!' replied Saint Peter. 'Heaven was not made for fools.' Beware, then," said the Tio, "how you embark on such a serious affair."

* This will be found in "La Familia Alvaredo" of Fernán Caballero.

"Tell me, Tio, have you ever heard of the Cortijo de Agua Dulce?"

"Have I heard of Saint Peter and Saint Paul! I was in service with Don José—may his soul rest in peace!—and I do commissions now for Don Lucas. I am a *corredor*, a broker and sell for him horses, cattle, pigs, corn—all that he can raise upon the farm."

"He is your friend?"

"I gain my farthings as I can. But Don Lucas Peñaflor is not sympathetic, and gains no man's esteem."

"Are you likely to visit the farm soon?"

"Not unless you have business for me there. I will do it with dispatch. I am to be trusted, Señor Ingles, they will speak for the Tio Mochuelo in all the three kingdoms of Andalucia."

While the other was speaking, Frank had taken from his pocket a handful of gold coins and held them out in his open palm.

"Do you wish to earn this money, friend?"

"If I may by fair means. Are you honest, señor *mío*? He who consorts with wolves soon learns to howl. A rotten apple ruins its neighbors in the cask. Mix in dark doings and you will soon be as bad as the worst. Señor, you must speak more plainly if you would gain my help. I am no *corta bolsas*, no foot-pad, but of honored people, respected myself as one should be when one's hair is gray. Tell me the whole truth. When the frying-pan crackles there is something on the fire. Throw away the husks and come at once to the grain."

Frank felt that this dry old stick might be of invaluable assistance. Therefore, with a sudden outburst of words, and in Spanish more fluent than grammatical, he blurted out the whole story.

"Is that the way the water runs?" cried Tio Mochuelo with a grin. "This beats a baked chestnut. It comes to the greyhound by inheritance to have a long tail, and to the young it is as natural to be in love. *Pues*, señor; the boat may be old, but it has crossed the ferry before, and may do so once again. My head is snowy but my heart is warm. Show me how I may help you and I will."

"Do you know Dolores?"

"The maiden of whom you speak is a *prendida*, a jewel of whom the crowned king might well be proud."

"They treat her there with the harshest cruelty. I wish to rescue her."

"New Knight of the Rueful Countenance! Am I then to be your Sancho Panza?"

"It is no joke, Tio. They are killing her by inches."

"That they shall not, I swear. I love her too. In the days past, when I traveled by the farm, she had a kind word for me always, and a smile in her bright eyes. But tell me how I can help you in this affair."

"Go for me to the farm, on business, as you please. See Don Miguel, the little brother; have speech of Lola herself; but by one method or another spy out for me what they are doing—what their next move may be. Hasten, good old man—hasten; but be cautious. I will await you here."

Let us see now how Lola had borne the sudden overthrow of her hopes.

They brought her to her room; laid her—she was perfectly passive—upon her little stretcher-bed, and left her broken-hearted and miserable; more miserable than, in spite of all her previous troubles, she had ever been before. The door of her room was fast secured. Ramona looked in once or twice, as the gaoler inspects a police-cell, but did not speak. They brought food. How could Lola eat? There was nothing left for her but to sob and sob her heart out, till by and by for very weariness of tears, sleep overcame her, and brought a short-lived period of forgetfulness and ease.

Early next day came both Ramona and Doña Teresa. The latter seemed especially anxious about Lola's precious health, but carefully avoided any reference to what had passed. Our heroine, however, attacked them forthwith with the strongest language at her command.

"Why halt half way ladies? You have imprisoned me like a galley-slave or felon condemned. Why not lead me out to the *garotte*, or let the brave Lucas point his blunderbuss against my suffering heart? I am weak and helpless. I cannot hope to struggle against your vile persecutions. It well beseems you to treat me thus. You appear now in your true colors, unfeeling, remorseless wretches."

"If you talk so freely, Dolores, we must leave you till you are in a better frame of mind," observed Doña Teresa, walking out of the room with her head high in the air.

Ramona remained, and tried to reconcile Lola, by taking her hand and attempting to caress her. But Lola repelled her with loathing.

"Viper!"

"My Lola, you wrong me in classing me with those others. I wish to be your friend, if you will but let me. Wait! you will see by and by;" and with this mysterious speech she left Lola alone.

The fact was, that although joy had reigned in Agua Dulce

at Lola's recovery from the hands of the daring villain who would have carried her off, a little consideration convinced them that they had not done with Frank Wriottesley yet. Lucas, now thoroughly realizing all that Don Mariano meant when he bade them be on their guard against this reckless Englishman, saw that it behoved them to concert fresh measures if they would keep Lola secure. The first obvious step would be to remove her to some other place—to some concealed spot, in an out of the way corner of the lonely Sierra, where they might defy all attempts at pursuit.

But how was Lola to be got away? Doña Teresa, speaking with the uncompromising sternness which was a part of her character, said by force, if force were necessary. From this notion even Lucas recoiled. Ramona suggested that they should await the arrival of old Bellota, for whom a messenger had been dispatched. Surely they could rely on his authority?

"She has snapped her fingers at her grandfather often before, and will not now ever cross the room when he commands," said Doña Teresa. "No; if she is to be removed, it must be by force."

"Leave it all to me," said Lucas. "I have a scheme of my own, which, if I am supported, cannot fail of success. Ramona, will you assist? You can act a part, I know. Play this properly, and our troublesome charge will follow you, if needs be, to the lowest abyss of that *inferno*, which by and by, I trust, will be her mad lover's portion."

To Lola the remainder of the day passed on leaden wings. The house was always quiet; to-day it seemed silent as the tomb. Only once, although her windows were fast shut, she fancied she heard horses' hoofs and many voices in the *corral* below. Was she wrong in supposing her grandfather had come? At any rate she did not see him. Of this she was really glad; in her despair she might speak words she would afterwards regret.

And so she spent the evening, as she had spent the day, alone; and when night came, she betook herself to bed with aching heart, regretting that she could not lie down in her grave to be at rest forever.

But she could not sleep, even lightly, as hitherto she had managed, in spite of the dreariness of her life and the unbroken confinement to the house. To-night her nerves were all unstrung, and agitation combined with despair to keep her eyes unclosed. She was in that state of unnatural alertness which sometimes overtake us in the night-watches, when the lightest sound is magnified to awful proportions, and vague horrors which exist but in the over-wrought brain assume tangible and terrifying shapes.

More than once Lola started up in alarm. The furniture in the room seemed to crack and creak; the rats and mice were holding a carnival in the cupboards; now and again the casement groaned as if in pain, or the wind growled in the chimney as though it were, like herself, imprisoned.

"What was that? Who is there?" she cried in accents of alarm.

Undoubtedly the key had turned in the lock of her door, but so gently that only an acute and watchful ear could detect the sound.

Roused to thorough alarm, Lola sprang up, and raising herself on one arm, would have shrieked but terror paralyzed her.

Next moment came a distinct "Hist!" and a figure carrying a light glided across to where she lay.

It was Ramona.

"What brings you here?" asked Lola, with difficulty mastering her fear. "Were you afraid I should escape through the floor? Is it necessary to watch me from hour to hour, as if I were condemned to die at dawn?"

"Hs—h! Speak low, for the love of our Blessed Mother. I could not come sooner,—not till the house was quiet. Lucas would kill me if he caught me here—and you also, without hesitation."

"It would matter little to me, Ramona, if my end came this very night. Life has no attraction for me now. Little joy have I remaining but in him whom they struck down at my side last night—my only friend. Perhaps I shall never see him more."

"Speak not so, daughter. Friends you have still. But he, this gallant youth, who came like the Cid Campeador, like a splendid angel arrayed in glory, he is not far off now. Have but courage, constancy, and you may meet him again—who knows how soon?"

"What is this you mean, Ramona? Do not trifle with me. Do not raise hopes which cannot be fulfilled. Have you no pity?"

"Yes; and more. If you will but trust in me, you will find a true and faithful friend."

"Look!" went on Ramona after a pause, "do you recognize this?"

It was a small gold ring, nearly plain, with one large ruby in the centre. Inside the hoop were the letters "D. to F.," and the date. Her gift to *Paco!*

"How came you by this? Quick, speak! For the love of all you hold most dear, keep me no longer in suspense."

"He gave it me himself, late last night."

"*Dios mio!*"

"Wait! let me tell you all. When you were overtaken and separated, he was left upon the ground senseless!"

"*Ay de mi!*" cried Lola, with a quick gesture, as if she had received a sudden wound.

"Have patience, daughter. Lucas and the men carried you back in their arms. Their only desire was to see to your safety. Him they left to his fate. They were men—heartless and un-pitying men. Such is not my character, Lola *mía*, and it cut me to the heart to see this *guapo chico* extended senseless, lifeless it might soon be, if no helping hand were near. So I went back as soon as the first wild turmoil was over, creeping out so that no one should see me, taking with me bandages, oil also, and a small crock of wine from last year's vintage."

"May the Holy Saints bless you, Ramona!" said Lola, fervently. "And you found him? Was he hurt? In pain? *Dios de mi vida*, tell me quick."

"I found him by his horse, a little off the path, whither he had crawled, but had been too weak to travel farther. At my approach he lifted his head, but sank back again. I dressed his wounds—"

Lola expressed her grateful thanks with a warm pressure.

"Gave him wine—"

Another expressive gesture.

"Helped him to sit up, and waited till he was sufficiently recovered to speak.

"Yes, yes; go on."

"His first question was for you."

"Sweet *queridito* of my soul?"

"I told him all from the first, and when I had ended he seized my hand—art jealous, Lolita?—kissed me for an angel, and prayed me with fervor that I would stand your friend. Could I refuse such pleadings? No, child! I promised readily that for the future my lot should be cast with yours—with you I would stand or fall."

"Ah, Ramona! these are happy words indeed."

"The night was coming on apace, and I was in momentary dread that Lucas or some one from the farm should find us together. I tried to get away; but he would not suffer it till we had talked further, till he had arranged some plan for meeting you again."

"Oh, joyful news! and how can this be brought to pass?"

"The plan we settled upon must, I think, succeed, if you have but the courage."

"My heart is of brass. All that maiden ever dared, can I do, and more."

"He is waiting for us at Benimahoma, far away in the Sierra

above Ubriquez. Have you strength to travel thus far to-night?"

"To the world's end, if I am to find my *Paco* there. But how shall we leave the house?"

"Lucas trusts me fully; I have the keys. Down at the end of the lane we shall find two mules and a man to guide us."

"*Paco*?"

"Perchance; or mayhap he will send the beasts by one whom he can trust, and meet us further up the road. From Benimahoma we shall travel to Ronda, thence to Malaga, where you can take ship and fly to England, if you please."

"And you, Ramona, you too will go? How good you are! you sacrifice all. They will never forgive you here. You cannot return to this house, will you give up all—for me?"

"If I do, you will not forget me?"

"No, truly. From this time forth I swear that you shall be my sister. Of all that I possess, now and in the time to come, the half shall be yours."

"Thanks! a million thanks, Lola; but I knew that I might rely on you. Now, time presses; it will be daylight before three. We must be moving. Get dressed warmly; the night air is chill. We will hasten down as soon as I see that the road is clear."

To prepare for the journey was with Lola a marvelously short operation. She put on a thick traveling-dress, threw a shawl over her head, and carried another to keep her feet warm while upon the mule's back. Then, at the signal from Ramona, with trembling but rapid steps, she crept down-stairs. The door-way was open, and she could see through it the starlit sky beyond. The night was still. Save the chirrup of grasshoppers and crickets or the croaking of the frogs, there was no noise abroad. Along the lane innumerable glow-worms winked and blinked at the fugitives.

It was as Ramona had said. At the end of the lane were the mules, and with them a man muffled up in a big cloak. Could this be Frank himself? thought Lola with a thrill as he lifted her tenderly into the chair-saddle, and squeezed her hand perceptibly after he had arranged her draperies and made her comfortable for the journey.

Hardly had the thought crossed her mind when by mere chance the folds of the cloak fell from the man's face and disclosed the features of—Lucas!

With a shriek Lola threw herself to the ground. Lucas swore loudly, and threatened her with instant death if she did not remount. Ramona also, seeing that the moment was critical, added her entreaties and implored Lola to obey, assuring

her that Lucas's blood was up, and her life would certainly be sacrificed.

But Lola obstinately refused to stir. They might kill her : of her own free will she would not move a single step.

Then Lucas came up to her.

"This is childish, Lola ; you had better submit. If you will not come, we must carry you," and as he spoke, he seized her by the waist.

The next instant a ringing blow between the eyes felled him to the ground.

"*Pronto!* hold his head while the señorita mounts."

It was Frank Wriottesley who spoke. "Now, darling, keep a good heart. Jump!" and she was in the saddle. The same draperies which were to have served on mule-back did now as riding-habit. She settled herself in the saddle, got her horse by the head and felt ready to ride for her life.

No less indeed was required of her. Frank had mounted as quickly. Tio Mochuelo sprang upon his hack, and before Lucas could recover from the effects of the blow which had laid him low, before Ramona could reach the *cortijo*, to which at the first signal of alarm she had rushed with loud cries for help, Lola and her two champions had galloped off at racing pace and were lost in the dark shadows of the night.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN FULL FLIGHT.

AT the *cortijo* during the first few moments following Lola's escape, confusion reigned supreme. Ramona had soon raised the house with her cries. Indeed, all were already on the *qui vive*, being parties to the scheme for removing Lola from the *cortijo*, and waiting to hear that the project had been successfully accomplished. Don Mariano, who had arrived the previous evening, did his best to remain cool, but he was furiously angry, and could only stammer out :

"She must be recovered—at all hazards. Where is Lucas?"

"They have killed him!" cried Ramona "I saw him dragged from his horse, and then I fled. They might have killed me also."

"Murder and abduction! what more? Is this to be permitted, madam?" he asked, turning to Doña Teresa who stood by trembling. Her usual impassive manner was gone. For the moment she could not speak.

"Is this to be borne, madam? Is there no law in this Spanish

land to punish such atrocious crimes? Are we to suffer this accursed foreigner to ride rough-shod over us, as if we were mere worms beneath his feet?"

"But what, for the mercy of the saints, can we do, Don Mariano? Already I have lost one child; I can spare no more. These villains are unprincipled and desperate."

"And brave as they are desperate," added little Miguel.

"Brave! they are hounds, curs, cowards, vile thieving poltroons, no more. They could not face us if we should overtake and attack them; and therefore they must be pursued to the death, or my Lolita is lost to me forever."

"As is Lucas, son of my soul. *Ay, Dios mio, Dios mio!* How shall I replace him?" cried Doña Teresa, wringing her hands. "Lucas is murdered; he is dead—dead, and we shall see him no more."

"Not so, madam. I am alive and well," said the man himself, suddenly appearing amongst them.

Doña Teresa, transported with joy, was about to throw herself into her son's arms, but Lucas coldly put her aside.

"*Mira, quitate*, madam; let these fondlings keep. There is other and more pressing work in hand. Don Mariano, you know what has occurred. Shall you tamely submit to such a fiendish outrage as this? Shall we not follow the fugitives if we can but come upon their track?"

"Yes, yes, at all hazards," replied Bellota with an oath.

"Let us lose no further time then. Are the men still sleeping, Miguel? Rouse the *aperador*; tell him to get half a dozen horses saddled—Macho, Relleño, Bandolero, Bavioca, Urdax—fast as lightning. Run, lad, run!"

"Good Lucas! good Lucas!" whined Bellota as he fawned upon him. "Good youth, capture her—capture her, and she shall be yours: dollars also—hard dollars in piles—thousands and thousands—enough to buy you wide lands and keep you in funds forever."

"I hate him, señor, hate him as does the devil holy water. He shall not beard us thus. I will fight to the last with cloak and swords to defend the sacred privacy of our home. He shall not go unpunished, I swear."

"Which way, think you, have they gone?" asked Ramona.

"To the Rock perchance?" said Miguel.

"No; there he is too well known. To Cadiz or Malaga; his object will be to escape observation, and gain more quickly his own cursed land."

"You are right, Don Mariano. But either way the road is long, and we may yet hear of them—overtake them, too, I trust before many hours are passed. Leave all to me."

So Lucas took command, and evinced much power in grappling with the difficulties of the situation. Within half an hour a mounted messenger had been dispatched towards Ximena, another towards Gaucin, a third to San Roque, on the chance that the fugitives might double back on the Rock. The orders for one and all were to make no inquiries, to simply come upon the scent, to ascertain the line by which Frank and Lola traveled, then return at once to the *cortijo* with the news. The active following up of the clew Lucas reserved for himself with all the force that he could collect. With these he proposed to take some central position, from which, according to reports received, he could move in the direction required. Last but not least important in his arrangements, was a private communication sent by a sure hand to the Ermita de San Antonio, giving Pepe full particulars, and urging him to take advantage of the chance for securing Frank Wriottesley.

Old Bellota was highly gratified at the promptitude which Lucas displayed. He readily fell in with the young man's views, only he wished to claim the assistance of the alcalde and the civil guards. To this Lucas strongly objected.

"There are but few guards about. They have been withdrawn towards Madrid; a new rising among the troops there is imminent, and the government has concentrated the civil guard. The civiles fight always for the cause of order—for those that are in power."

"The law cannot refuse to help us."

"They would help only by instituting a *tramite*, a long-winded process; we should make many depositions, and fill many pages of stamped paper, and appear in due course before the judge of peace. What then? Lola and her lover will have gained the sea-coast, and you will see them no more."

"As you wish, Lucas of my heart. Carry out your plans yourself. Only tell me, are you strong enough to recover her from his clutches?"

"I trust so. I have many friends who will lend a helping hand." He did not care to explain that his principal allies would be the brigands who numbered Pepe among their band. "But my horse is ready; I must be moving."

"And I also," cried Bellota, quite forgetting in his eagerness all the infirmity that had been gaining on him during the last few months. "Wait, Don Mariano, at least until we know the road to pursue. Then come, as you traveled here, on your sure-footed mule. One of the men will lead you. Farewell!"

"Go with God and in the keeping of the Holy Virgin," cried Bellota fervently. And Lucas rode off.

To return to our fugitives. For a mile or two after their first wild start they galloped on without drawing rein. It was everything to gain time. Besides, the road would soon narrow, and grow so difficult that any pace beyond a fast amble would be impossible. In their breathless haste there was no time to talk. Lola for her part was content to know that she was safe with Frank. Frank, too, was well pleased at the success which had attended his second onslaught on the farm—due in the first place to the skillful assistance of the Tio Mochuelo. But this success was only partial as yet; all that they had gained might be lost if they lingered on the road. Frank therefore spoke little, only giving Lola now a word of endearment, now a word of praise at her splendid endurance and pluck.

It was not till they approached Ximena, within an hour of their leaving the *cortijo*, that Frank, concerned for Lola, and fearing lest her strength might prove unequal to this tremendous strain, wished to pull up and give both riders and horses a brief breathing space.

But Lola was all impatience to be off.

"*Vida mia*, my life, think not of me. I could ride on for hours. Why pause? Surely they will overtake us. Heaven help me! Sooner than return to suffer as in the last few days, I would gallop on wild horses till the day of doom."

It was, however, really necessary to pause. Tio Mochuelo was to leave them at the town; his share in the escapade had better remain secret if he was to continue at peace with people from whom he earned his bread. But Frank, before they parted, sought advice from the old *arriero*. So far it had been plain sailing, the track open and not easily missed. But to reach Ximena was only the first point gained. From that many roads diverged. By which would it be best to travel?

Frank wished to make for some important sea-coast town where he might marry Lola and take ship for England.

This was his newest resolve. He half hoped Sir Hector would relent at the first meeting with his bride. For who could resist Lolita? But even should this appeal fail, the Ladies Fairfax might lend the newly-married couple a helping hand until he could make a fresh start in life. He was young, active, humble-minded; any employment that fell in his way would be acceptable, and he felt sure that the wife he had won, as it were, at the sword's point, would readily throw in her lot with his wherever it might be cast.

But whither should he go—to Cadiz or to Malaga? What did the Tio Mochuelo think? Cadiz was the nearest; but the road between Ximena and Alcala, by which town they must pass, might be called a road only by courtesy. It was more a moun-

tain moraine than a highway for Christians. It would delay them hours; only by infinite pains and long scrambling could they hope to pick their steps among the bowlders, ruts and pitfalls of this inhospitable pass. There was open country beyond Alcalá certainly; but this would rather favor the pursuers. News would travel there more readily than in more thinly populated mountain districts. Malaga, therefore, was to be preferred to Cadiz; but there was more than one route to it. One road led across the valley towards Cesares, crossing the Gaucin hill lower down, where they might reach the coast-road through Estepona. The chief objection to this route was, that by following it they must remain during the early part of the day in the neighborhood of the farm. It would be better to make for Malaga *via* Ronda. They must decide too whether they would take the Cortes Valley, the most direct line, or make a detour by Ubriquez and the pass called Solomon's Well. It was to this last that both Tio Mochuelo and Frank himself inclined. It was the path most retired, unlike the Cortes Valley, which, being the principal line of communication between Ronda and the Rock, was always well frequented. They would soon be spied out in the valley, and a dozen mouths would be ready to give information about the fugitive lovers.

These weighty questions were duly discussed as they rode slowly on, till Tio Mochuelo was forced to leave them. They bade the old man "*adios*" with many protestations of eternal gratitude, and repeated promises that he should find his account in having thus helped them in time of need.

"Tio, you shall hear from me within a month or two. Call at Montegriffo's, if you come to the Rock, and ask for a letter which I will send."

"And I will remember you all my life," added Lola, "as one of our best and dearest friends. May God and the Virgin also reward you for your great kindness and devotion to us."

"I would do the same and more for a single smile, señorita, from your bright face," said Tio Mochuelo. "*Adios! adios!*" he repeated, waving his hand as they rode away.

There was no leisure for further leave-taking. To push on as rapidly as possible was the order of the day. Let them but get well hidden among the mountain paths above Ximena before daylight, and, Frank hoped, they would have fully eluded pursuit.

Dawn found them high upon the mountain slopes. Looking back, the hill of Ximena, capped by its old tower, lay in the foreground, at their feet the Sogarganta, twining around its base like a slender silver braid, in the middle distance rolling waves of woodlands, the cork-forest of Alinoraima; beyond again the

Bay of Gibraltar and the Straits of Hercules, looking like a still lake hemmed in by high peaks.

The daylight was sickly at first and cold. Nature was waking from its last sleep, yearning in desolation for the morning kiss of its beneficent mother, the sun. But in the lands far South those gray and colorless hours are short-lived. Even while one gazes the sky grows iridescent with light, a pale pink glow suffuses the deserted hills, the mists at their base curl up and shrivel like shavings before a fire, and in another second the full golden blaze bursts upon the world with a warmth and brightness that will perhaps become intolerable ere noon.

And now for the first time Frank could look upon the face of the girl he loved. Just as the dawn caught fire from the bright sun, so her wan cheeks deepened under his glance, with a vivid blush. And now for the first time she was conscious of the step she had rashly taken; she was harrassed with inward misgivings that this elopement was unmaidenly and wrong. Yet had she not been driven to it? Did not the blame rest more upon her cruel grandfather than upon her? She tried hard to re-assure herself with such arguments, but these did not satisfy her; and tears sprang to her eyes as she met Frank's gaze and sobbed out:

"May the Blessed Virgin forgive me if I have done wrong. Truly our separation was hard to bear, my *Paco*, but even that I could have survived had they not been so cruel."

"Dear heart! think not of the past. Look forward only. Do not distress yourself with painful thoughts; they will sap your strength, and you will need it all before the day is done. Our road is long, and we cannot linger by the way."

"*Paco*, your words are law to me; I will do my best: I will ride on and on, even till I drop."

"And then, child, I will lift you on to my saddle, and still we will make our way. They shall not catch us, never—if you are only firm."

They continued to press on as rapidly as the road permitted. It varied much. Here and there were open spaces, a mile or more of forest glade, and in beneath the trees the beaten path led as it might through a gentleman's park at home. Over these spaces they cantered gayly, taking heart of grace from their increased speed. But next came a succession of stony wastes, the spurs and offshoots of the neighboring Sierra, over which their horses made such slow progress that dejection came upon the riders. Next it was a rapid stream that must be forded, or flat fallows, lying low, with spongy soil, or a close growth of brushwood, through which they won their way toilsomely.

All along it was Frank's desire to avoid observation. Forta-

nately there were few people abroad at this early hour. A boy might be flushed unexpectedly from among the palmetto bushes where he was supposed to be minding herds, or an old woman was passed taking her clothes to be washed in a pool hard by. None of these did our hero dread. They gave him a sleepy good-day, and forgot at once that they had seen him. Not so would it be with the wandering field-laborers or early muleteers with whom they might chance to fall in; officious gossips all of them, who would assuredly stand to stare, and not less certainly talk of the travelers they had met on the road. For the same reason Frank kept aloof from all towns, great or small, whether a straggling hamlet crawling like a caterpillar across its rocky home, or a thriving place perched picturesquely on rising ground, whereof the centre was a Moorish castle or a mediæval church. In such the advent of English travelers would rapidly become known.

Yet they had been now nearly six hours in the saddle, and soon the horses must feed. Lola also would need rest. Frank himself was growing faint with hunger. What he sought was a wayside *ventorillo*, a small hostelry of decent appearance, kept by friendly folk who would give kindly shelter to Lola and make her at home. One or two such places he passed, but none that seemed to his taste till they came to Montera, a quiet spot hidden under a clump of cork-trees. There was a woman—a stout buxom dame—scrubbing a copper vessel near the door-way under the shadow of an *emparrada*, or rough veranda of vines. To her Lola spoke in her pure sweet accents, asking for hospitality. They had started early, too early, and she felt fatigued. Would the kind landlady take her in and let her rest awhile—at least till the first fierce heat of the day were passed?

“This house is yours, señora. Make what use of it you will. You and your good husband are welcome.”

Whereat Lola blushed, and, to hide her confusion, quickly dismounted without Frank's help. While she with the *ama* entered the house, Frank led the horses round to the stable, loosened their girths, and himself filled their mangers with barley. Everything depended upon them; to keep them in good fettle must be his first care. So he stood and watched them while they fed, then gave them water, examined their shoes, rubbed them down, and overhauled all their gear preparatory to a fresh start.

While thus employed he heard voices outside. One was the landlady's.

“They have been here but half an hour.”

“*Ingleses?* English for certain?”

“I know not; the lady speaks Castilian.”

"Who guides them?"

"No one. They are only two."

"What brings them this way think you, *ama*?"

"Is not the road open to all the world? What business is it of mine? I am but the *ama*, the keeper of an inn, rejoiced to get custom. The more the merrier. *Mas Moros mas ganancia*—the more Moors more money."

"Can you tell me which way they go when they leave this, and how soon they start?"

"*Oye!* Though you were as cunning as Cain or as sharp as a fishing-rod, you will get no more from me. *Ni oste ni moste.*"

"You might be a tortoise, *ama*, you keep so close within your shell."

"*Uno y no mas*, Señor San Blas. One word should be enough for such as you. I want no share in your doings. Some day the soldiers will be my ruin for harboring your comrades and you. *Aur*; good morning."

"Not so fast, *ama*. I must and will know who these travelers are if I watch here all the day. Bring me a *trago*. I have not yet had my morning-drink. Set it out in the shade while I put up my horse."

As the new-comer quickly approached the stable, Frank had little time to consider what he should do. He might brazen it out, or he might buy the other over to silence if he were really an enemy's spy. Perhaps the best plan would be to keep out of sight, at any rate at first; and with this object Frank crouched low in a dark corner of the stable whence he could see the stranger's entrance without being himself observed.

A streak of light fell upon the man's face. It was Pepe! Should Frank lay hands on him or leave him? Was he friend or foe? Was the fellow's inquiry mere inquisitiveness, or had he been sent in pursuit;—all these questions raced rapidly through our hero's mind, while Pepe was leading his horse towards the manger.

"*Caramba!*" cried Frank's old groom as his eye fell upon the horses already in the stable. He recognized Taraxicum at once, Macho also. There was no need for further inquiry. He had gained all the information he required.

Turning on his heel, he made his way quickly out into the open air. Frank followed as fast, but overtook Pepe only as he was remounting his horse.

"Stop, man, stop," shouted Frank, "I shall do you no harm, stop!"

"Harm! you have done me more harm already than one life-time can repay? Stand out of my path or I shall ride you

down. Look to yourself, *maldito*. The fox was paid in half a moment for the faults of forty weeks. My turn is coming now. Stand aside!"

With that he dug his one long spur into the side of his hack, and breaking away from Frank at a bound, galloped rapidly out of sight.

Fresh danger was brewing, beyond doubt. It was time, Frank felt, for them to be moving on. He went into the house at once and calling the landlady said:

"*Ama*, rouse the señorita; we must be off."

"She sleeps, señor—deep sound sleep. You would not disturb her yet?"

"It is a matter of life and death. Go in; say I am saddling the horses, that I have food and wine in my wallets, we will eat as we go. Hasten, good friend, hasten; there is no time to spare."

Lola came out presently with wide-staring eyes, but thoroughly awake.

"*Paco*, what new trouble is this?"

"We cannot delay another second here. The horses are ready, we must away. Have you strength, dearest, to ride on?"

"Ay! strength and nerve to last me through it all. I have rested too. Fear not on my account. Quick! let us remount and press on."

Once more they galloped forward. And now their road bore away to the right, up towards the mountain, and they soon began to breast a steady incline. As they rose, the scene grew wilder and more desolate. Up here there was nothing but bare stretches of stony upland, sown thick with great boulders or choked with rocky crag. Only now and again through the openings came flashes of bright distance, of far-off purple hills, or they made out patches of green vineyard or formal orange-grove grouped around the white glistening homesteads, spotting the landscape down below almost at their feet.

Still onward, without a check. As the day advanced the sky grew overcast, and our fugitives, who had reached a high level, seemed to be right among the clouds. Now and then through a rift the bright sunshine streamed. Presently right across their path rose a dense wall of limestone, a sheer straight bluff, the summit hidden in the mist. Here the stony road made a long detour, and turning this seemingly impassible barrier, brought them to the mouth of a pass, the well-known pass of "Solomon's Well." Its sides hung low, and were dank and slimy like a tunnel under a river-bed.

Frank looked at Lola, fearing that at this wild and threatening scene her heart might quail. She answered with a smile:

"Fear not for me, *Paco*. Nothing can frighten me if you are by my side."

"We shall reach Ronda in a few hours. There, at the Fonda of my friend John Polo, whose wife is a worthy soul, you can recruit your strength, and to-morrow at dawn we will ride on."

As he spoke, a tall figure sprang from behind a rock and summoned them peremptorily to halt. Then he whistled, and half a dozen others appeared as if by magic from hiding-places around.

"*Alto!*—Halt, in the name of authority of Isabella, Queen of all the Spains, whom God preserve for many years. Halt, and dismount. Obey, or your fate will be upon your own heads."

"Who and what are you?" cried Frank, indignantly, looking at the dirty gang that surrounded him. They were all armed, and their guns were leveled at his or Lola's head. "Who and what are you, who dare stop peaceful travelers on the public road?"

"That you will soon learn. Surrender yourself, thief and abductor, to the officers of the law."

"*Paco, Paco!* do not be deceived," shrieked Lola. "These are no officers. They are bad people; they mean us evil."

"Not if you submit, madam. We are the stronger; let me advise you to submit."

"Not without a struggle," shouted Frank. "I can guess your trade, for I see among you one villainous face I know too well. Stand aside, or you will repent interfering with an Englishman." As Frank spoke he drew a revolver, and with a word of encouragement to Lola, prepared to ride through his captors.

"Do not provoke us; we are in the right. This maiden whom you have carried off has friends, and it is to aid them that we check your flight. Halt, then, and submit while there is time."

"Never!" cried Frank: hardly had the word passed his lips when a pistol-shot from Pepe's cowardly hand laid him low. The impulse had been irresistible. Here at length he had his enemy before him and at a disadvantage. He fired, without warning, without the consent of his confederates.

With a groan Frank dropped from his saddle, at his horse's feet.

Lola remembered no more. Shrieking loudly, she threw herself in an agony of grief upon her lover's prostrate form, and lost all consciousness.

When she came to herself she was back at Agua Dulce, and her grandfather was at her bedside. The old man was quivering still with the excitement of the chase; for he had never faltered in his pursuit, and, with Lucas, reached the pass just after

Frank fell. Strange to say he did not upbraid her, as she felt he might; but asked her simply whether she would soon be strong enough to travel home.

"There is no home for me, *abuelo*, on this side of the grave. I pray the Holy Virgin that I may soon pass over to the happier land where my *Paco* is waiting for me among the spirits of the blest."

"I cannot wish that you were dead, Lolita; but O, misguided girl, that it should have come to this! That all pains should have been vain to keep you from disgrace! Unhappy child of an unhappy mother! born under an unlucky star, it is your fate to carry grief and misery wherever you go. What tempted you to take this false step from which there is no return?"

"That which I have done I would do again—a thousand times over. I was to have been his wife; I am his widow first."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

VIATICUM.

"SORROWS come not by single spies, but by battalions," the great master has written, with a truth which has doubtless come home to most mortals. With the overwhelming anguish of Frank's loss Lola's troubles were far from ended. Fresh misfortunes followed, hardly less grievous to bear. Only, in the ever-present anxiety they superinduced, in the feverish uncertainty as to what their issue might be, she found an anodyne which dulled the recollection of the bitter past.

Almost immediately after his return to Rosia Cottage, Don Mariano was taken seriously ill. The recent strain upon one so advanced in years could have had no other result. Even before Lola came from England his health was greatly impaired. There had been signs that he was breaking mentally and physically. Unhappily, instead of finding the rest he needed, excitement and exertion had been forced upon him, and the strain had been more than he could bear. His condition was most critical.

This new sorrow that overtook our heroine was surcharged with self-reproach, for she could not conceal from herself that she was in a measure its cause. Humbled and very sad, Lola sought to make what amends she could. Day and night she watched by her grandfather's side; hanging upon the utterances of the doctors, hoping against hope. Could she but have laid down her life for his, how gladly would she have made the sacrifice. Death had no terrors for her; it was rather to be welcomed as the only sure relief from the pain she endured.

Don Mariano grew worse and worse. Ere long his life became a question of hours. Throughout our Lola never flinched. The cousins from Agua Dulce, Doña Teresa and Ramona, came at the first news of the old man's illness, and wished to minister to him; but Lola would not tolerate their presence. If they had not lent themselves so readily to her grandfather's harsh resolves, she need never have sought to escape from Agua Dulce, and *Paco* might be still alive. But Don Mariano faintly expressed a wish that they should remain. Now and again he asked for Doña Teresa, and appeared glad that she was close at hand. The old lady herself bore Lola's dislike with seraphic composure. It seemed as if she wished to be snubbed and ignored. She readily assumed all the blame of the past, and implored Lola's forgiveness, but her cringing subservience was easily explained. She saw that Don Mariano's hour was come; after his death Lola would succeed to his wealth.

At the last Don Mariano was for the most part unconscious, but once or twice he roused himself and looked at Lola—who never left him—with the gaze of one surprised. "Dolores!" he would mutter, "Dolores, daughter of my heart! You have then returned?" Next moment the fancy changed and he seemed to see only the vacant chair by the hearth she had abandoned. "Gone! gone! child of my soul, gone! lost to me forever!" he cried in accents so pitiful that they wrung the hearts of all who listened, and Lola knew that even now, at the last, the one great grief of his life possessed him to the exclusion of every other. She herself was forgotten. He knew her only as her mother's likeness.

The priest came, with bell and book and Sacred Host, and the last rites of the Church were administered. Lola held her grandfather's hand, and with dry eyes watched the old man's face, as one might look at the light of a lamp at its last flicker.

Suddenly his eyes unclosed.

"Lolita *mia*! Lolita, child! you are forgiven." Then with a strange return of strength, he cried, "Quick, quick! the lawyer; it is not too late," words which to those assembled were void of meaning.

He looked wildly around, and with the last effort of his failing strength put Lola's hand in that of Doña Teresa, as if to commit her to the other's charge. With bowed head and copious tears, Doña Teresa murmured her readiness to accept the sacred trust. Neither she nor Lola saw in the dying man's act more than natural anxiety for the future of the friendless girl.

He never spoke again.

The funeral over, the time came for looking into Don Mariano's

affairs. His effects had been sealed up at his death by his man of business, Mr. Escosura, a dry old stick of a lawyer, who had long been in his confidence.

The family came from Agua Dulce, mother, daughter, and all the sons, for Alejandro also had posted from Salamanca to attend the funeral with his brothers. They were assembled—Lola would not appear—in the little sitting-room at Rosia Cottage, and were already permitting themselves to conjecture whether the rich old man had remembered any of his cousins in his will. Doña Teresa hinted this to the lawyer when he appeared.

“There is no will,” remarked Mr. Escosura, briefly.

“No will!” cried Doña Teresa. “Why, my cousin often spoke to me of what he proposed to leave us. He knew our poverty and the hard struggle we had always made. He always promised that at least the mortgages he held upon the farm should be annulled in his will. No will!”

“I do not say there never was a will. I only state that there is none in existence now. My deceased client destroyed his last will and testament in my presence only a few weeks ago.”

“Then what becomes of all the property?”

“It goes to the next of kin.”

“To Lola!” said Ramona in an envious tone.

“Pardon me,” went on Mr. Escosura, speaking to Doña Teresa in measured tones, “the señorita, Doña Dolores, would naturally, as you are aware, inherit as next of kin; but unfortunately in the eyes of the law she is not even a relative. She was not born in wedlock. The property passes therefore to—”

“Us!” said Doña Teresa, with as much dignity as sudden joy permitted her to assume.

“May I inquire,” she went on after a long pause, “its probable value?”

“I can scarcely give you more than an approximation. The landed property, the vineyards at San Lucar, the sugar-plantation in the Vega of Malaga, cannot be exactly valued in cash. There are, besides, the houses in this town and in Cadiz. Don Mariano Bellota was also a large holder of English stock, of Indian railways, and other Government securities. In round figures, deducting succession-duties and other expenses, I should say you would come in to £200,000 English—about a million of dollars, more or less.”

“All ours!” shouted Ramona, nearly beside herself with excitement.

“Mine, child!” interposed her mother. “It is through me, recollect, that you were related to Don Mariano. His mother and mine were sisters.”

"*Pues!*" cried Lucas, who had been lost in amazement at this most unexpected piece of good fortune. "What does it matter, madam? What is yours will be ours in turn, or I know not the law of Spain."

"And our cousin, sweet Lola," remarked Alejandro, the first to remember her, "is she left out in the cold?"

"There will be no provision for her whatever."

"You cannot suffer her to want, madam," said the young officer, with some glimmering notion of proper chivalry towards the unprotected girl.

Miguel would have followed suit had he dared. But he was a feeble little soul, afraid of his life almost in Lucas's presence. Besides the part he had played in aiding Lola to elope might yet be discovered, and to appear openly as her champion might hurry on detection.

"She has her great friends in England," replied Doña Teresa with indifference. "Let her go to them, if indeed they will receive her after her shameless conduct, the sin of which should sting her in this world and in that to come."

"And failing them?"

"Son, let every person see to his own affairs. It is our turn now; the fisherman profits when the river's in spate. Poverty has long been our portion, and now that we are rich, let us hold to what we have. This child shall not reproach me with neglect, but I know what is due to me and my own family first. The shirt is closer to the skin than the coat."

It was clear that Doña Teresa had already resolved to ignore the promise made to Bellota before he died. No doubt the old man at the last had repented of his haste, and wished at least to secure Lola a home and the friendship of her cousins. How much this friendship was likely to be worth was already apparent. The whole family party had now but one thought—to discuss the great riches to which they had so unexpectedly succeeded, and consider how they might be duly enjoyed. Of course they must leave Agua Dulce; a narrow farm would not suffice for people of such ample means. It was right that they should have a house at the Court, at Madrid, the capital, where they might take a leading place among the best society of Spain. Ramona, richly dowered, might marry a grandee, a Knight of Calatrava, perhaps a Minister of State. Lucas should be returned as a deputy to Cortes, and politics once open to him, he might rise some day to be Governor of Cuba or ambassador to a foreign court; Alejandro should be moved into a crack regiment of horse, and Lucas should see that his promotion was not delayed. For little Miguel they must purchase an *empleo*, a sinecure place in the government service, in which there would

be ample scope for his peculiar talents as an indefatigable scribe. Then they might all travel, if the fancy should take them. They might drink the waters at Caratracá, have a villa at Aranjuez, Alicante, or San Sebastian. They might cross the Pyrenees and lord it among the fashionable French folk at Biarritz, or in Paris, the centre of the world. Most great proprietors in Spain left their estates to take care of themselves; Agua Dulce, therefore, might share the same fate.

Meanwhile Lola was utterly forgotten by all. For herself, she much preferred to be left alone, and thanked the others in her heart for their considerateness in not intruding upon her grief. Only by chance did she hear of the sudden change in her fortunes; but so sad was she and so apathetic that the news hardly affected her at all. It had never occurred to her to speculate upon the chances of succeeding to her grandfather's wealth; and even now, when she was disinherited, the loss of fortune gave her no greater pang than the regret that her grandfather's rancor should have gone to such extremes. She mourned the loss of worldly wealth merely because it implied that she had also lost his love. Her only comfort was, that in the last words he spoke he had forgiven her, and doubtless would have restored her to favor had he been longer spared.

"You seem but little concerned," said Doña Teresa, the first time they met. She was somewhat surprised at Lola's stoicism. "Are you aware what all this means? That you are now poor and dependent—"

"Upon whom, then?" asked Lola, sharply.

"Upon us. Not that we shrink from the burden imposed. We are Christians, I hope, good Catholics, and have been taught that charity is among the virtues blessed by the Church. We cannot let you starve, Lola; of that you may rest assured. What little is ours now, is so only in trust, to be distributed to those who are really in need. You, as our relative, are fully entitled to a share. There is a room for you always under our roof, and food. But you must not look for those wasteful luxuries once so freely lavished on you; you must work as we have all worked—"

"I am to be your servant, señora, is it so you mean? In exchange for alms, for bread, which you would throw me as to a dog. I thank you; but I reject your princely offer."

"Child, you must be mad. What then will become of you?"

"Sooner than live an hour longer than I could help with you and yours, Doña Teresa, I would turn Maritornes, kitchen-wench or scullion in the lowest family on this Rock. But it need not come to that, I trust; there are many refuges open yet even to the bruised and broken such as me. Our mother church will not refuse my vows perhaps—"

"You would take the veil!"

"I am hardly fit, as yet, for a holy life," said poor Lola, with a sigh, thinking of her past life, and magnifying to terrible proportion the one offense into which she had been tempted by her absorbing passion for Frank. "But in time perchance, purged and purified by suffering, they may accept my vows. Meanwhile I will go to England, back to those kind ladies with whom I stayed before."

"Psha! child. Are you still so ignorant of the world and its ways? Think you they they will receive you now?"

"Why not?" asked Lola, anxiously, already anticipating the reply.

"I wonder you can ask. Be sure that when they know all—when they have heard of your shameless escapade, how you scouted our counsels, and, throwing decency to the winds, went off with this ill-bred, disreputable youth—"

"Silence, señora; you speak of the dead," said Lola, sternly. "Do not insult his memory, if you did not respect him when alive."

"He is in suffering doubtless, as he richly deserves, for his sins, the heretic!—the shameless abductor of a silly, short-sighted, unmaidenly fool!"

"Señora, you show neither decency nor good-breeding yourself. I will not listen to you further."

"You must listen, daughter. I rule here now, and when I speak I look for submission to my will. I tell you the doors of Fairfax are closed to you forever. Those great dames are prudish old maids, and, as such, strong sticklers for propriety, for purity of mind, and rectitude of conduct. Contact with you now would be deemed contamination by them. Do not hope to return thither."

"I think I know them best. They may chide, as perchance I deserve, but they will not despise me, nor turn me from their doors."

"Insensate, headstrong child! What if you travel all that way and find yourself mistaken in the end? Do not hope then to return to find a home under my roof. Pearls are not to be thrown twice before pigs."

"I should not seek to return. It is the dearest wish of my heart, Doña Teresa, never to look upon your face again. The world may not be large, señora, but I pray God it may suffice to keep us always wide apart."

Nothing could shake our heroine in her determination to leave Gibraltar without delay. The cousins would not help her much, either with advice or money; so she went at once to Mr. Escosura, and through him heard when the next mail was expected

from the East for England. She offered him her jewels to pay for her passage; but the old lawyer was human, and years of musty work had not sucked up all the freshness of his heart.

"Miss Lola, command me. I am altogether at your service. You are right, I think, to go to Fairfax."

"You know where I go?"

"Your grandfather had no secrets from me. On every point of consequence he consulted me, and generally took my advice. It was in spite of all I could say, believe me, that he destroyed the will."

"Tell me, please, what it means? I have never heard exactly. I only know that while he lived I had money always, just as I required it. Now I hear that I am penniless. What is the reason?"

"Señorita, you have had trouble enough of late. I would not add to it one jot. But if you insist on that question, I fear I shall make you sad."

"Go on pray."

"You have heard the story of your mother—her life, her early death?"

"Oh, yes; from end to end."

"You know that she left her home—"

"Yes, yes; spare me the repetition of the sorrowful tale. It is not that I seek to know."

"But, señorita, in that lies the answer to your question. Still you do not understand? Must I then tell you that your father and mother were never married. Forgive me, but you pressed me to speak."

"And that is why I become a beggar? So much now I know; but I shall never comprehend the reason. For my dear mother's sake I suffer. Of that I do not complain. But by what right or justice ought my cousins to profit by my misfortunes?"

"Wrong-doing often recoils upon the innocent head. Yours is a hard case, señorita, but not the first of the kind. You must be brave, lady: show a proud spirit in spite of all. You have good friends still—"

"Not of my own flesh and blood."

"Your cousins then are hardly kind?"

"They treat me as dirt."

"Their heads are turned by their new fortunes. Put a dog in leather breeches and he'll cut his old friends in the kennel. But a monkey's a monkey although dressed in silk," said Mr. Escosura, smiling. He had lived all his life in these parts, and could not forbear pointing his remarks at times with the pithy sayings of the language which was almost his native tongue.

"*Sí, señor,*" added Lola, for the moment roused to answer in the same style. "The best acorns are sometimes picked up by the worst pigs."

Until the moment of departure actually arrived, Lola had little intercourse with her cousins. They were too much occupied to give her much thought or attention. Lucas had gone to Madrid with Alejandro; Miguel spent half his time at the tailor's, Ramona devoted herself alternately to an enormous box of Portuguese sweetmeats, and of fashion-plates from Seville. As for Doña Teresa, the dismantling of Rosia Cottage and the removal of furniture and knickknacks to Agua Dulce kept her continually busy. So when the hour of leave-taking came, the short farewells were soon said, and Lola, with positive pleasure, parted with her cousins, as she hoped, forever. It was Mr. Escosura who had secured her passage and who saw her on board.

"God bless you, Miss Lola," he said. "You know where to find a friend if you require one. Write to me at once, if there is anything that I can do. Another word, *señorita*, before I say good-bye. This packet"—he put into her hands a small parcel carefully wrapped up and sealed—"This packet contains a small jewel-box and portrait which belonged to your dear mother. Long ago they were intrusted to me by your grandfather to be put into your hands only after his death."

"Oh, thank you, good Don José! I shall value them indeed. *Adios, adios!* God bless you for your kindness to a lonely and friendless girl."

Thus the last tie was severed. Lola felt that she had cut herself adrift from her home and country. She should never see the Rock again! The thought filled her with melancholy, and she could not leave the deck until the strange tall island of stone had faded from sight; and then when she went below, it was with increased grief, as at the loss of another dear old friend. Indeed, this journey taken for the second time promised to be painful in the extreme. Each step would recall memories of the past, and remind her of her changed condition since last she crossed the Bay. Then the worst was the sudden separation from her lover, but though the pang was bitter there was hope behind. Now she had lost everything, hope included, almost at a blow. She had lost lover, grandfather, fortune, self-esteem. No, not self-esteem. Whatever the world might say, she could not blame herself for the part she had taken. Could she live her life again, she knew she would do exactly the same.

As the voyage came to an end, uncertainty as to how the only friends left her would receive her filled her with hourly increas-

ing dread. She had written them a few lines, and followed fast to England without waiting for a reply. She had said simply: "My grandfather is dead: I am penniless and without a home. I have lost my lover, and am disgraced in the sight of the world. Will you take me in, at least for a time, until I can join some quiet sisterhood and withdraw altogether from the world to spend the remainder of my days in penance and prayer?"

She strove to reason with herself. The Ladies Fairfax might be hard upon her, but at least they would be just. If they took her to task, they would listen to her exculpation; they would throw her great trials into the balance and forgive her something on their account. Nevertheless, when the hour of meeting actually came, Lola quite broke down. She had hardly courage to go out into the saloon when the stewardess told her her friends had arrived.

Lady Henriette was there in person. "Sweetheart!" cried the kindly soul taking Lola at once into her wide embrace, "how glad I am to see you again! I wish from my heart that you had never left us. There, there! cry—it will do you good." She went on talking and stroking Lola's hands as if she were a little child.

It was long since Lola had listened to a voice so sympathizing and sweet. She could not reply at first, but looked up at Lady Henriette with eyes full of gratitude and love.

"You want rest, Lola—"

"And comfort. Since last we met, lady, sorrow only, and bitter, bitter grief, has been my portion. At times I have wished I was with my mother—gone to everlasting rest."

"No, no; there are many happy days in store for you yet. There is a lining to every cloud."

"My clouds are of the black night itself," said Dolores, sadly. "I shall never see the bright sun of day again."

Lady Henriette did her best to bring the painful scene to a close. It was very sad to listen to the girl's melancholy voice, to look into her wan sorrowful face, and note its strong contrast to the deep mourning she had worn since she had lost Frank. How were they to win back the roses to her cheek? Was it possible to give new fire to the burned-out embers of her heart?

At least she should have all the affection possible to lavish on her. It might do something to soften her sorrow.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WRONGS SET RIGHT.

BEYOND Lola's short, self-abasing letter, the good Ladies Fairfax had no clew as to the causes which had driven her back to England. And her expressions were very mysterious and vague! She talked of disgrace—what blight could have fallen upon this half-opened flower? There could be no serious disgrace, of course. A child so pure-minded and innocent could be guilty only of venial indiscretions, to which perhaps, being just then morbidly inclined, she gave undue importance. But she said also that she had lost her lover. Taking this statement with the other, there seemed little doubt but that Frank's thoughtless eagerness had led them into some silly escapade. This was the conclusion at which Lady Henriette almost immediately arrived. Perhaps Lady Marion was of the same way of thinking; but for some days the sisters did not compare notes. They seemed to instinctively understand that Lola's secrets must be respected; that all reference to the past should be scrupulously avoided till she herself chose to withdraw the veil. Lola was friendless and had appealed to them. Their course was plain—they must welcome her warmly, giving her clearly to understand that their house was freely offered as her home.

Although thus for a time forbearing, feeling doubtless that Lola's reserve must not be lightly disturbed, Lady Henriette was by disposition a trifle inquisitive, and could not combat her nature forever; so at length it got the better of her, to the extent of obliging her to hint to Lady Marion that it was really expedient that they should know the exact truth.

Her sister prepared to scold her very sharply.

"You will be meddling, Henriette, to the day of your death. Cannot you leave Lola to begin the subject herself?"

"But Marion, it is so strange. She was to have had all her grandfather's money; he told us so himself, and he said he was rich. We hear now that he is dead and that Lola has not sixpence. What can it mean? For all we know, she may have been the victim of some sharp practice. In her own interests, I think—though of course I defer to your better judgment—it is my opinion, I mean, that we ought to know exactly what has happened?"

"Upon my word, Henriette, you surprise me." Lady Marion's tone was enigmatical. "You seem to grow wise all at once in your old age."

"Marion, I never quite understand whether you are in jest or earnest."

"This time, for once, I am in earnest. You have not made so sensible a remark since you were a child."

Lady Henriette colored with pleasure. Praise from Lady Marion was rare.

"I am ashamed of myself for not having thought of this sooner," went on Lady Marion. "It is our bounden duty to inquire what has become of her fortune."

"As she is really our niece," observed Lady Georgina, who was present, "although you have overborne me always, and refused to recognize her rights, I think the whole affair ought to be put in the hands of the family solicitor. She has been robbed, depend upon it. Spain is full of robbers—I have heard our father say so often." She spoke as positively as if she had herself prosecuted the whole nation for an attempt to pick her pockets.

"I do think," said Lady Marion, "that it would be advisable to sound Lola; but it should be done very cautiously."

"Of course, of course!" cried Lady Henriette, eagerly. "I shall be most careful how I open the subject."

"I doubt very much, Henriette, whether you can be trusted with so delicate an operation," said Lady Marion with a shade of contempt in her voice.

"She has not sufficient tact, I am sure, nor is she the proper person; only she is so fond of asserting herself, and never seems to remember that she has elder sisters," said Lady Georgina. "In any matter of this importance, I claim as the eldest, and poor George's representative, to speak for the family."

"Well, well! we had better do nothing hastily," interposed Lady Marion.

Georgina would probably blunder over the business, and her inquiry, instead of eliciting details from Lola, would expose secrets of their own which were not intended to see the light.

"It is nearly a year since Lola came to us first," said Lady Georgina, at once confirming this view. "If she is ever to know who she really is, the time has surely arrived now."

"Georgina, you are wandering from the subject," replied Lady Marion.

"I think you take far too much upon yourself, Marion, and such language to me is almost intemperate."

"Marion means that the present question does not refer to Lola's birth, but rather to—"

"Thank you, Henriette; I need no one yet to interpret the Queen's English. I learned it for myself before you were born."

"Dear, dear! you are very captious this morning, Georgina."

"Pray say no more about the matter," said Lady Marion with her customary himpff. "It can well keep; and in our present tempers, to discuss it further will only tempt us to quarrel."

"I have no desire to quarrel with any one," observed Lady Georgina with dignity—"I am as patient as—as—Penelope—until I am attacked. But I will not sit still while my sisters abuse me and ride rough-shod over my head."

Lady Marion smiled a sour smile of contempt at the absurdity of this simile, but did not answer. She had made up her mind that the matter should be dropped for the present. If Lola was to be induced to open her heart, it could be only by insensibly gaining her confidence, and not by any set plan.

Meanwhile our heroine had fallen into the old place quite naturally, as if she had never left Fairfax at all. She was like a child of this childless house, one to be caressed with that plentiful affection which old maids are ready to lavish on any living thing—upon cats or cockatoos, Cuban poodles, monkeys, or white rats, when eligible specimens of the human genus are not to be obtained. And there was something of the unreasoning devotion of the dumb animals in the passionate affection which Lola gave them in return.

But, as time passed, Lola's condition gave her kind hostesses more and more cause for alarm. It seemed as if this return to the old scenes, where she had spent so many happy hours, deepened rather than assuaged her grief. The quiet of this secluded English home was grateful to her weary heart, but yet it drove her in upon herself, and made her more sad.

It was fortunate that, although late in the season, the weather was still mild; for she loved to be out of doors. The house was irksome to her; her desire was to be out, alone, in the sunshine, under the free air of heaven. There was no spot in all the pretty grounds that she did not know by heart, but she preferred the banks of the tiny river that traversed the garden from end to end. Here for hours she sat and mused, where the overhanging mountain-ash and the feathery foliage of the weeping-willow drooped into the stream, and the rushing rapids of the tiny water-fall reminded her of the plish-plash of the fountain in the Moorish *patios* of the land she had left forever. At times she got into the punt and paddled slowly up and down the stream, pausing under the cascade, or gazing down into the shallow water, half envious of the lazy trout, and wishing she might, like them, lie at rest among the long weeds, and know no care.

One of the sisters generally went with Lola to her room at night. Lady Marion and Lady Henriette almost fought for the privilege. There was just the faintest suspicion of jealously be-

tween them. Lady Henriette always surrendered her turn with a bad grace, feeling convinced, she said, that Lola preferred Lady Marion.

Late one evening Lady Marion was before the fire in a wide arm-chair with Lola on a low stool at her feet.

"Dear child," said Lady Marion, "you have been with us now some weeks. Are you more resigned, more happy, then when you came?"

"Oh, yes; as happy as I can hope to be in this world of woe."

"You must not brood too much upon the past. There is a present, and a future which will depend upon how we spend that present."

"The bitterness of the past overshadows my present and future too with a black pall too heavy to be easily removed."

"These sorrowful memories make you exaggerate, Lola. In time you will look on what has passed in a less serious light."

"Lady Marion, for me there can be no relief on earth. I can never forgive myself for the evil that I have caused."

"Child, child! it grieves me to listen to such self-upbraidings."

"Lady, do not spare me; I cannot spare myself. Know you not there is blood upon my hands? It was I, with my own headstrong passion, that caused my *Paco's* death. But for me, too, but for my willful opposition to his wishes—and he meant it truly for my good—but for me, my grandfather would have been still alive. The blood of both, of him who was my only relative, and of the man I loved better than my own life, are upon my hands."

"No, no; you blame yourself without cause, Lola, I feel sure."

"You will not absolve me if you knew all. Listen!"

And with many interruptions from her sobs, she told her piteous tale, winning often, as the story proceeded, words of sympathy and encouragement in the painful task. It was all clear, of course, but for one small mystery. How came Lola, who had been reputed his heiress during Don Mariano's life-time, to be without a *son* after his death? Had her grandfather disinherited her?

In real solicitude, Lady Marion plied Lola with questions.

There had been a will, yes, Lola said, but her grandfather had destroyed it simply to punish her for her wayward disobedience to his wishes. This was what the lawyer had told her at Gibraltar.

"I know not how it came to pass, but by the destruction of that will I lost all. Not that I care, lady; only it shows I had also lost his love."

"Then what became of all the money?"

"It went to my cousins in Spain—though why, is more than I can understand. They said that these cousins were his nearest relations—cousins the nearest, nearer than me, his only grand-child, born of his only daughter! It seems a grievous wrong. More grievous is the knowledge that many blame my mother for this—my dear sweet mother, whose injured innocence cries aloud to heaven."

"You know your mother's story then?" asked Lady Marion with bowed head and in a low voice.

"I know only that she was the victim of some deceitful man, who lured her from her father's house, and left her to die. I know too, that that man was my father—my father, yet I hate him as my bitterest enemy."

"Lola, do not speak so harshly of him. Some day you may regret these words," cried Lady Marion in great distress.

Should she reveal the whole truth now? She hesitated, fearing for the moment that, by acknowledging kinship with George Fairfax, she might seem to share of his guilt; and might lose the fullness of Lola's affection.

Suddenly Lola said:

"My mother—may she rest in peace, sweet darling!—you never saw her, lady?"

"Never!" replied Lady Marion, promptly but surprised.

"Nor I, in life; but since I left my home out yonder upon the big Rock, my eyes have been gladdened often by her gracious face."

"But, when, child, how? In dreams?"

"Yes, in my dreams, but also while I wake. I have her picture now. Would it please you, Lady Marion, to see it too?"

"Surely!" replied the other; and Lola rose to fetch the small sandal-wood box which Mr. Escosura had given her.

"How came that box into your possession?" she asked as soon as she caught sight of it.

"It was my mother's—"

"Ah, yes; of course."

Lola opened it. Within were a few relics—a small brooch made out of the silver-gilt tiger, the badge of the regiment in which George Fairfax had served. This one had once adorned the breastplate of his sword-belt. There were also some withered flowers, a few trinkets of little value, and within the lid two miniatures set in plain gold frames. One was of a dark-eyed beauty in a mantilla, the other a young officer in the uniform of a by-gone day: a red coat with silver shoulder-scales, and a crimson rope-like sash with two heavy bell rope tassels hanging from his breast.

"She is like what you are now, Lola."

"Like me, too, lady, she had her sorrows—griefs more burdensome, perhaps, than mine; but they were not of her own making. She owed them to this *rubio* in the red coat, whom she trusted too well."

"Your father!" said Lady Marion, hastily; and had Lola been more observant, she might have noticed that the statement was spoken with a curiously positive utterance, and not at all as an interrogation.

"My father, I presume. Not that I care to know. Had he not crossed my mother's path her fate might have been far different. She would have mated among her own people, and thus have saved herself much pain—herself, and those also who claimed the closest ties with her. He may be my father, but I owe him no affection."

"Be assured, Dolores, that had he lived, he would have been the first to make reparation in his own way."

Lady Marion, like many of us, was ready enough to answer, in her own way, for a person not able to contradict her.

"But may I see more closely, Lola?" she asked, taking the box with the miniatures into her own trembling hands.

How well she knew it! This box had been in times past one of her most highly prized possessions. As a child she had received it from her own mother, and as a girl she had surrendered it to her brother George, simply because he had one day desired to have it. George was always the object of her adoring worship, and she was glad—with the devotedness of her sex for those they love—of any opportunity for self-sacrifice. When George Fairfax had died suddenly in London, and his effects had been gathered together, she had asked her father if she might again have her little sandal-wood coffer; but it was missing. She seemed to see in this carelessness another proof of his forgetfulness and indifference; new ties and fresh interests had, she feared, effaced the memory of her deep affection.

Tearfully and in silence Lady Marion examined the little box which came back to her like a message from the dead. Then, as she turned it over in her hand, one finger pressed a little knob in the side, the trick of which she well remembered, there sprang out a secret drawer—undisturbed till now these twenty years.

Within was a small slip of paper. No more.

Lola, who had been gazing into the fire, had hardly observed Lady Marion's movements, and looked up in some surprise as the other exclaimed:

"Lola, dear child! a happy chance has led us to a seemingly impossible end. This paper—"

"Where did it come from?"

"From a secret drawer in this box. There it must have lain

since Geo— since some one acquainted with the secret last hid it there."

"But what does it contain?"

"Enough, I trust, to clear your poor dear mother's name, to restore you to your rights, and to re-establish the character of one whom I always loved better, far better, than myself."

Lola's first surprise now grew into staring amazement.

"Can you trust me, Lola?"

"Oh, yes—to the death. Why do you ask me?"

"Will you trust me with this paper? Will you forbear to question me as to its contents until to-morrow? Will you grant me this much?"

"More. But I am confused; your words burn like fire in my ears."

"Lola, do not, I beseech you, dearest child, press me to tell you more to-night. I too am overcome with surprise. Wait till to-morrow."

And Lola, still wondering, readily consented.

Lady Marion could not indeed trust herself to talk much of the discovery she had made. This slip of paper was a certificate of marriage between George Fairfax and Dolores Bellota; the ceremony had been performed at an out of the way village in Sussex shortly before George's removal to London and his sudden death. When Dolores returned alone to Gibraltar she had faintly striven to make her father understand that she had married the man with whom she had eloped. But she was already greatly unhinged by illness, and as her statements were quite unsupported by documents, Don Mariano set them down as wild efforts to win his forgiveness for the man he so loudly abused. There had been a mock ceremony, he supposed, but no more.

Next morning Lady Henriette and Lola breakfasted together, but the former made no allusion to what had occurred. There was nothing in Lady Henriette's manner to show that she had been taken into Lady Marion's confidence. Breakfast over, Lola went as usual into the garden, and was walking in the shrubbery when Mrs. Bridle came to her, and begged her to enter the house. "M'ladies" wished to speak to her. "Which of them?" Lola asked, rather loath to leave the garden.

"All of 'em, Miss," replied Mrs. Bridle. "I don't know what's come to them. They're sitting in a row as solemn as ninepins, Lady Georgina in the middle; and if it was me as had to go before 'em now, I should be all of a tremble, for they might be all of them Lord Chancelleroesses agoing to try me for my life."

Somewhat fluttered Lola went to the drawing-room.

There was a tinge of color upon her usually pale cheek as she asked:

"You sent for me?"

"We did," replied Lady Georgina, solemnly, and paused, as if she had already forgotten why.

"Do sit down, dear child," said Lady Henriette, hastily.

"There is nothing very dreadful in store for you."

"Pray go on, sister Georgina," added Lady Marion with a half frown on her face. "Suspense is never pleasant."

"Marion, allow me to speak my own way, or I shall not talk at all."

"Then I shall do it for you, if you go on shilly-shallying in this way."

Upon which Lady Georgina began to complain that she felt faint, and the business of the solemn conclave was for a time interrupted while restoratives were applied.

Meanwhile Lola looked appealingly from one sister to the other, and her distress was so evident that Lady Marion sacrificed Georgina and spoke out promptly and to the purpose.

"We have sent for you, Lola dear, to do you an act of tardy justice. We wish to tell you, what indeed you should have known—"

"Long ago!" cried Georgina, suddenly recovering, and determined to assert her rights. "Long ago, if I had been allowed my own way."

"There can be no excuse, indeed," went on Marion, "for having delayed so long; that much I must admit with sorrow. But to keep silent now would be sheer wickedness. Therefore we have sent for you in this formal way to tell you that your father was—"

"Our George!" again interjected Lady Georgina, shaking herself free from Henriette, who was vainly attempting to keep her calm.

"Our brother George," repeated Marion, more explicitly, but in a low voice. "To him your poor mother owed her misfortunes, perhaps her death. We always shrunk from telling you this—perhaps with over-sensitiveness, fearing, though innocent, to be included in his guilt."

"Stay, stay, kind Lady Marion. You were wrong to imagine that. Your kindness to me has been so great since first I came beneath your roof, that I can never forget it. As for my father, your brother, as now I hear—"

"Blame him no longer, Lola. He was not so wicked as you suppose. That paper which came so strangely into my possession last night was a marriage certificate. You are really our—"

"Niece!" Lady Georgina was quite irrepressible.

"You are now Miss Fairfax, Lola," said Lady Henriette,

taking up the parable, "and must be introduced as such, as soon as you have spirits enough to face the world again."

Lola shook her head sadly. "It is a pleasure to know that I am nearly related to you who were before my kindest friends. If events had been ordered otherwise—"

She was thinking that if *Paco* had but lived, how proudly she could have borne herself as one of his own class, a fitting help-mate now by right of birth.

"There is no thought in our minds, Lola dear, of forcing you to enter society for many a long day to come."

"But it is right that the county should know," said Lady Georgina, in a quavering voice. "Though I cannot think," she added, with the rapid transition of fidgeting people, who, when one worry is satisfactorily disposed of, find a new source of annoyance in the very opposite extreme,— "though I cannot think how they are to be faced when they know the whole story. I almost wish now—"

"We must make a straightforward statement," said Lady Marion, decisively. "The question cannot be shirked, and no half measures will do."

"No, no; of course not. But I was thinking of Lady Hetherington's tongue. She always hated George, you know."

"Lady Hetherington does not rule the world, nor even this neighborhood. Besides, it is not your fault, Georgina, that her tongue was not wagging long ago."

"I'm sure I never gave any one reason to talk about me in all my life," whined poor Lady Georgina.

"Himpff!" said Lady Marion, meaning to put a stopper upon the conversation. And fondling and caressing their new niece—a ceremony long protracted and very agreeable to all—the interview was over.

However, the matter could not be allowed to end by this mere family recognition of Lola's birth. The marriage must be legally established, for upon that depended Lola's rights to inherit her grandfather's property. For this purpose the advice of the family solicitors was obtained. One of the partners in the firm came down himself, full of importance at the prospect of the approaching action of ejectment upon the *Peñafors*. The matter would have to be conducted at Madrid; they would open up a number of new and interesting points, and would depend in some measure upon the interpretation of the law of Spain. There might be litigation. It was as well to be duly armed. Was it possible to ascertain whether either of the witnesses to the marriage were still alive? The names were not known at Ovingdean, the village where the marriage took place. *Wraggles* and *Honeybun*—who had ever heard such names as *Wraggles* and *Honeybun*?

Lola had; and greatly to the lawyer's delight she explained how she had met a Major Honeybun during her first voyage from the Rock. He had indeed told her then vaguely that it was possible he might some day be of service to her. She had his card and his address. The name was the same; could it be that he was one of the witnesses whose signatures were appended to the deed?

Full particulars being obtained, Major Honeybun was written to. He replied promptly to the effect that he had been servant to George Fairfax, and had certainly been present at the wedding in Ovingdean Church. Everything was therefore in train. There was irrefragible proof of Lola's legitimacy, and ere long the Peñaflores might expect to be rather rudely disturbed in their enjoyment of Don Mariano's wealth.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FRANK MISSING.

SOME days after the *eclaircissement* described in the last chapter came a letter to Lady Georgina which threw that good soul into the greatest confusion. It was from a man—a strange man; and who of the other sex presumed, without her permission, to correspond with her?

"Sir Hector Harrowby," said the note in question, "presents his compliments to Lady Georgina Fairfax, and would be grateful if her ladyship would fix a day when he could wait upon her to discuss a matter of the utmost importance, to himself, if not to her."

"If it had been a proposal," remarked Lady Georgina, simpering, "it could not have been more delicately worded."

"You don't mean to accept him, Georgina, I hope," cried Lady Henriette, "and leave us two young things to take care of ourselves?"

"What silly nonsense is this?" interposed Lady Marion, who was not in the best of humors. "Who is the man, and what can he want with you?"

"How can I tell?" replied Lady Georgina, looking down, but not displeased with the notion of having a suitor even at her time of life.

"Who is this Sir Hector Harrowby?" asked Lady Henriette. "I do not remember to have met him in the world. Perhaps he is an old flame of yours, Georgina."

"More likely a medical baronet, with a special gift towards the treatment of dementia. He will find two excellent subjects

here at Fairfax," cried Lady Marion with a himpf! more than usually contemptuous.

"But is he to come?" went on Lady Henriette.

"What! to our house? How can we receive him. We are spinsters—"

"Georgina, you are probably old enough to be his great-aunt," cried Lady Marion. "Would you like to write and ask some young married woman to come and chaperon you? Of course he is to come, and I will see him, if none of you will. You had better write, Henriette, and say *we*—not Georgina alone—are ready to receive him."

A sad and miserable man had been Sir Hector Harrowby these weeks past, as he sat alone in his great house thinking of his nephew, and grieving over the breach between them. Was it never to be healed again? Why had Frank despised his messenger, and the olive branch he carried? For Butterfield had not missed his opportunity, and on his return from Southampton, whither he had followed Frank with Sir Hector's letter, had described, not without exaggeration, what he was pleased to call the young gentleman's "violence." At this Sir Hector had grown not unreasonably wroth. His overtures, then, were contemned; it served him right for his condescension. Any one but this headstrong Francis would have fallen in gladly with his uncle's humor, rather than be exiled from his presence in ruin and disgrace. But let him take the consequences of his obstinacy. From henceforth Mr. Wriottesley's name should be forgotten at Grimswych; all reminiscence of this ungrateful youth should be ruthlessly erased. A clean sweep should be made of the room which Frank had always called his own, which was filled with the rubbish and litter collected since early boyhood—battered cricket-bats, boxing-gloves, foils, muzzle-loading guns, that had once been his pride; and shelves full of dingy school-books, retained to be gloated over in their now despised retirement. There should be an end put to all his old favorites; to the decrepit pony which had first carried him to hounds, leading now a life of dignified ease as a permanent pensioner in the sweet-turfed paddock, from which he was brought now and again, with goloshes on his hoofs, to drag the garden-roller over the level lawn; blind Pinky, the trusty terrier, no longer able to travel, being blind and nearly bald, should be executed too.

While still in this fierce mood, Sir Hector recommenced the study of his family tree, and began to weigh the chances of finding another favorite who would suit him better than Frank. He might find one more subservient perhaps, some one more humble and poor in spirit; but would a lad of this sort be to his liking now? He had loved Francis chiefly for his independent

character, his proud ways ; and remembering this, he began to relent a little. Was it right that he should blame Frank for exhibiting traits which he himself had fostered, and professed to admire ? After all, this obstinate adherence to his love was but a repetition of a passage in Sir Hector's own youth. In his case, he had been hardly used by the girl herself ; yet in spite of all he loved her memory still. Had she been true to him, as was the girl Frank loved to Frank, no arguments, no threats, would have induced him to give her up, no aspersions would have been tolerated, no innuendoes believed.

And so, by degrees overpowering his first displeasure, passionate regrets and a growing unsatisfied longing for Frank's return began to take possession of Sir Hector. Mr. Butterfield, being sometimes obtuse, failed to see the change, and nearly came to grief by some ill-timed remarks on the worthlessness of the exiled heir.

Sir Hector's yearnings to see Frank increased in intensity as days and weeks passed, and still no tidings came from the Rock. Why did not Frank write, if only a word to acknowledge the receipt of Sir Hector's letter ? He might be resolute to have his own way, but surely he would not rudely reject the hand his uncle held out to him ? What could have possessed the boy ? What could have happened to him ? And as he brooded over the possibilities of serious mischance, he forgot to be angry, and could be only anxious, nay, terrified, with the exaggerated foreboding natural to such an old recluse. It was under the pressure of this mood that he brought himself to write to Frank's colonel ; a few lines inquiring for his nephew, and hoping he was well. To this came, after a strangely protracted delay, a reply that Mr. Wriottesley was not at present at Gibraltar. He was on leave : or rather, he was absent without leave, and already his disappearance had given some uneasiness to his friends.

But if his friends were anxious, what was Sir Hector now ? For the moment, he was dazed, and hardly knew which way to turn. At first he resolved to go out himself, in spite of his years, post-haste to Spain ; then he sent a special summons to Mr. Pownceby to come at once to Grimswych. By the lawyer's advice he wrote to Lady Georgina Fairfax. Frank had spoken of the Ladies Fairfax as people of consideration with whom Lola had been staying. Perhaps through them something might now be heard of the missing youth.

Lady Georgina, as the eldest sister—Mr. Pownceby knew all such details by heart—had been addressed ; but it was some relief to Sir Hector that the reply came from " the Ladies Fairfax." He would have to deal with them conjointly ; so much the better. The prospect of an interview with one lady alone had been

rather too much for his nerves. He had lived so long by himself, and had so studiously avoided all female society, that the approaching interview, had promised to be very terrible.

On reaching Fairfax Manor, he appeared before Lady Marion and Lady Henriette dressed most punctiliously in the fashion of several generations back; the high-collared, short-waisted, long-skirted swallow-tail coat; a nankeen waistcoat and light cassimere trousers strapped very tightly over Wellington boots. Around his neck was a tie of blue-and-white spots, coiled in endless turns, while the ends made only the smallest of bows. He carried his hat near his heart—a hat made specially for him by the tradesman he had patronized for years, the pattern of which, —a crown tall and tapering to a point like a flower-pot, but a very curly brim—perpetuated the fashion in vogue in his youth.

They received him in state, the two younger sisters only, for Lady Georgina had fussed herself into a state of feverish debility, and was quite unable to leave her room.

Sir Hector bowed low with as much ceremony as if he were being presented at Court.

"I must beseech your ladyships to pardon this intrusion," he said; "but I sincerely trust that the gravity of the subject on which I desire to speak to you will plead as my excuse."

Lady Marion replied with formal courtesy. She begged their visitor would not apologize; she and her sisters were pleased to see him at Fairfax Manor.

"Am I right in asserting that some little time ago a young Spanish lady was staying with you as your guest?"

"Quite!"

"A friend?"

"Our niece," said Lady Marion, plump. The relationship was not to be longer ignored.

"Niece! You surprise me. I fear I have been led into some stupid mistake. My information can hardly have been correct. The young lady to whom I referred was not of the highest extraction."

Lady Marion bowed, as much as to say that they could not be answerable for Sir Hector's blunders. Nor did she see at the moment any reason why this stranger should be enlightened as to all the ins and outs of the family history.

Sir Hector went on. His very presence in the house required further justification.

"The young lady's name was Bellota—Dolores Bellota."

"Dolores Bellota Fairfax is the name of our niece. It is of Miss Fairfax then that you desire to speak?"

"Of Miss Fairfax, if you will so far permit me. But I must confess that, until this moment, I was in ignorance of the relationship."

He was too well-bred to linger over this detail, but he was greatly puzzled. He was unable to reconcile the two individuals—the girl Dolores with this Miss Fairfax—the low-born *bourgeoise*, as he conceived her to be, and this offshoot from a good old English stock.

“Did Miss Fairfax at any time reside abroad with relatives at Gibraltar?”

“With her grandfather, yes. Mr. Bellota died very recently, and she has now returned to us.”

“Then she is with you now?” said Sir Hector, eagerly.

“Most certainly; she is at this moment in the house, probably in the next room.”

“Indeed!” And Sir Hector rose promptly to his feet. “Might I ask your ladyships—you would confer a very great favor upon me if you would allow me to see her at once.”

“Miss Fairfax is not in very vigorous health. She has recently passed through a great grief, and we would save her from the slightest agitation. You will excuse us, therefore, Sir Hector, if we inquire first what your business with her may be?”

“Certainly. I have reason to believe that a scapegrace nephew of mine paid her great attention at Gibraltar—”

“Your nephew’s name was also Harrowby?” asked Lady Henriette, very tremulously.

“No; he is my sister’s son. His name is Francis Wriottesley.”

“Gracious heavens!” cried Lady Henriette, turning quite white.

“I was angry with him,” went on Sir Hector, surprised at this somewhat forcible exclamation, but with an impassive countenance—“angry because I thought he should have first consulted me—at least before he committed himself to an actual engagement. I will not conceal from you, therefore, that I withheld my consent—at least until I had seen the young lady in question”—this was rather a mild way of stating the facts of the case—“a refusal I should be very pleased to retract, if, as I apprehend, this young lady possesses the many excellences which must assuredly distinguish one so nearly allied to your ladyships’ family.”

Neither of the ladies replied to his high-flown speech, and Sir Hector, who was still standing, looked from one to the other, waiting, and not a little surprised.

“I trust I have not been indiscreet? My nephew is in every respect a *bon parti*. He is—”

“Dear, dear!” exclaimed Lady Henriette, looking with an appealing glance at her sister.

“This is very terrible,” said Lady Marion, in a low voice. Even she was trembling and fidgeting with her hands; but with

as much composure as she could command, she turned at length to Sir Hector and said:

"Can it be possible, Sir Hector Harrowby, that you do not know—"

"I know nothing. Pray, pray, enlighten me."

"You have not heard from your nephew of late?"

"Not for six weeks—not, indeed, since he left England. We parted—in anger, but I wrote offering to forgive and forget. He has never replied—not a line. I have been anxious,—most anxious, and I came to you hoping that Miss—Miss—Miss Fairfax might perhaps give me some news."

"You had better hear it from us. It is but right, Sir Hector, that I should prepare you—"

"O madam! you rend my heart. Tell me, for the love of God. Francis! he is still alive, and well?"

Lady Marion bent her head and sat with folded hands unable to answer the question. Lady Henriette was sobbing and could not speak. It was impossible to misunderstand this painful silence. Sir Hector waited a minute or two, then, stunned with sudden despair, he dropped back into his seat and covered his face with his hands.

"My boy! my boy!" he uttered again and again, and for a brief space seemed perfectly unable to master his grief. Then with a perceptible effort he raised himself, and seemed to be facing his sorrow as an enemy to be openly met and overcome.

"Your ladyships will, I hope, forgive my weakness. But I loved him dearly, quite as my own son. I would give worlds to undo the past. I feel his death as if I had myself brought it to pass. The blow has fallen heavily upon me. I have hardly the strength to prolong this painful scene. Yet I would fain know more."

He was nerving himself to hear the full particulars. There might be some grains of comfort to be extracted from the details.

"We have only heard, in a few short sentences from poor Lola, an outline of what has occurred. Not unnaturally she shrinks from a subject that is so exceedingly painful, and we have not the heart to press her to speak again."

"Pray tell me what you know."

"They eloped together. You will forgive her this, I think. She was hardly used. Her grandfather, who was also violently opposed to the match, had shut her up in a lonely homestead near the mountains. From this they escaped together, making for the sea-coast, where they were to have been married, meaning to come at once to England and throw themselves at your feet. On the same day on which they first fled, in one of the

mountain passes they were intercepted by a band of brigands. Mr. Wriottesley, gallantly fighting for Lola, was shot at her side."

"Ah! and she?"

"Her friends, who were also in pursuit, coming up just then, rescued her in a weak and fainting condition, and she remembers little more, except that they took her back to Gibraltar."

At first Sir Hector could not speak. He could hardly take it all in. Frank was dead—shot dead. This one terrible fact for a long time possessed his mind to the exclusion of all other thoughts. The intelligence came upon him with so much circumstantiality that he could not at first question its truth. But by and by he permitted himself to express doubt as well as indignation.

"This cannot be allowed to rest here; I must have more positive news. Your ladyships must perceive that at present the fact of my poor nephew's death rests only on the statement of an agitated girl, at the moment in an agony of terror."

"But she saw him fall."

"He may have been wounded only. In any case, an outrage so atrocious cannot be passed over. English subjects are not to be assassinated, even in a distant land, without a word of remonstrance. I shall appeal, if necessary, to our government, but will in the first instance cause thorough investigation to be made upon the spot."

"You will believe I trust, Sir Hector, that we sympathize with you deeply. We are a little selfish too. Lola is very dear to us, and we would gladly bring back the roses to her cheek. Your success in trying your errand would be the best medicine we could administer. She is passionately attached to his memory."

"No efforts on my part shall be spared," said Sir Hector, emphatically. "I scarcely dare hope, and yet I do. I should wish to tell her so myself. May I see her?"

"Surely! She does not know you by name?"

"I cannot tell."

"I think not," said Lady Marion. "At least, she has never mentioned you, Sir Hector, except as 'his uncle'."

"It would be well, perhaps, to prepare her for the meeting."

"It would; and I also should prefer to wait a day or two."

Just at this moment I am unstrung."

He seemed to have aged in the last half-hour, and in spite of his brave words of hope he went away like one stricken with a mortal sorrow.

Nor did Lady Marion and Lady Henriette fail to feel the effects of their sad interview. They could not at first brace

themselves to talk to their sister of what had passed, but as she was nervously eager to hear the object of Sir Hector's visit, Lady Henriette confided to her as a secret that it referred to Lola's affairs, while Lady Marion herself went to our heroine.

"We had a gentleman here to-day, Lola, who asked for you."

"Yes; which?" replied Lola, quite unconcernedly. She supposed it was one of the many who had been at her feet when last in England, and in none of them did she take the slightest interest now.

"So you think there are some still who would care to come and ask for you, Lola?"

"I knew many; they were my good friends—no more. But I remember them, and I asked which of them all was it who came to-day?"

"No one you have ever seen."

"And yet he asked for me? I am become famous it seems. *Me alegro!* I am glad—No, not that; I can never be glad again."

The tears were always so near her eyes now, that such chance words brought them forth directly.

"Are you strong enough, darling, to meet him—one whom you don't know, and who is yet no stranger?"

"This seems like a riddle."

"Can you think of no one whom you know by report, but have never seen?"

"Columbus perhaps, or Don Juan Tenorio, the bad man of Seville, or Espartero, or the Duque de Rivas."

There was a touch of her old love of fun, but it was like laughter on the face of a mute.

"It is cruel to tantalize you. His name was Sir Hector Harrowby. You know it of course?"

"No; and yet—"

"He is the uncle who stood in the way; poor *Paco's* uncle."

"And what brought him all this way to ask for me? Did he come to upbraid, to tax me with my dear boy's death? Alas! I could not help it. If it had been left to me, I would have laid down my life for him a thousand times, I swear it by my salvation—and the sweet Virgin Mother knows it."

"He came, Lola, simply to inquire."

"Surely he must have known."

"Till to-day he knew nothing, absolutely nothing. He began by saying that he would no longer withhold his consent, and hoped to see you married soon."

"Too late! too late!" cried Lola, weeping bitterly.

There was a long pause, which Lola, with a manifest effort, was the first to break.

"Does Sir Hector really wish to see me?"

"If you feel equal to it."

"He must hate me. I fear to face him; and yet, for *Paco's* sake, I will. It is the least recompense I can make to his friends. When will Sir Hector come?"

"In a few days. He will write."

He came, and was shown as before into the drawing-room, where Lady Henriette sat alone.

"I have hastened here as soon as I could brace myself for the meeting. May I be permitted to see Miss Fairfax now? I cannot be at rest until the meeting is over."

"She is with my sister Marion. You do not wish to see her alone?"

"I should prefer it; but as you please."

As they were speaking the door opened to give entrance to a stately pale girl dressed in black who might have walked with some ancient sacrificial procession to her death.

She came and stood before him. Her face was quiet and cold, and when he took her hand he found it like ice.

"Lola!" he said in a voice so gentle that she felt assured of his forgiveness.

The next instant she was at his feet, embracing his knees, and hiding her face from his sight. She could have borne reproaches better than tenderness. Had he met her with the stern language she told herself she deserved, she might have continued impassive, but under his affectionate greeting she broke down.

"Nay, nay," he went on, gently stroking her lustrous hair. "I could not desire to check your tears, but you must not grieve forever, my sweet child. I have a vacant place in my heart—"

"Ah, señor! but that I dare not hope to fill."

"And why not? You were his choice, and now to me you have the first right."

"I do not deserve it."

"Child," said Sir Hector, solemnly, "the blame is mine rather than yours. But for my harshness and unreasonable pride, all this misery would never have come to pass. It is I, rather, who should ask forgiveness of you."

After a brief pause, he said:

"Your face haunts me like a dream, Lola. Surely we have met before?"

"It seems to me also that I have known you long and well. I can love you I think," and she kissed his hand.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN DURANCE.

FRANK WRIOTTESLEY was missing. Such was the startling news upon the Rock. It spread like wild-fire from mess to mess, from guard to guard-room; it was the staple of conversation at the *table-d'hôte* of the two hotels in the town; it was the common gossip of every household from Landport to Europa Point. Old stagers, who had long made Gibraltar their home, shook their heads ominously, and then added that it was no more than they had expected all along. This young man had been always too rash; his confidence was overweening; a catastrophe was certain sooner or later to overtake him. The neighboring country was notoriously insecure; a man traveling in the desert of Sahara or the Siberian Steppes would be more certain to return to his family than one who committed himself to the tender mercies of the savages of the Andalusian Sierras. Young comrades waxed indignant that a man so popular as Frank Wriottesley should come to harm, and asked whether some one was not to be called to account. People on the point of making a tour in southern Spain paused irresolute, doubtful whether they might not run the risk also of being kidnaped or killed.

As the gossip grew and gathered strength, it soon reached the ears of the chief authorities of the fortress. A staff-officer of high rank caught the rumor flying, and carried it at once to His Excellency "the Captain-general and Governor of the Garrison and Territory of Gibraltar,"—a stern old military peer, in whom much determination of character was blended with great kindness of heart. With him Frank Wriottesley, as a gay and gallant youth of engaging presence and foremost in field-sports, had ever been a prime favorite. At first Lord Montrésor laughed. It was some foolish escapade. The lad was as wild as a hawk. He would turn up when least expected. But as the Military Secretary still looked grave, his Lordship asked for the whole story.

All that was known was, that Mr. Wriottesley had returned a month ago or more. Although he had remained at Gibraltar only a few hours, one or two of his friends had spoken to him. He called at the house of Captain and Mrs. Sproule; his servants had seen him, and could give particulars of his sudden exodus into Spain. As he was a notorious vagrant, one to whom wandering among mountain by-paths had always possessed a peculiar charm, his absence was at first easily explained.

But now he had long over-stayed his leave, and no one, neither brother-officers nor friends, on the Rock or at home, had heard from him. Sir Hector Harrowby, his nearest relative, had written out to inquire if he was well. There was here some cause for anxiety, if not for alarm. In the midst of it all appeared an old Spanish muleteer, one who went by the name of "Uncle Owl," with an extraordinary story of an elopement. Mr. Wriottesley had run off with the daughter of a Spanish gentleman and Uncle Owl had met him in full flight.

"My dear Pleydell," said his Lordship, "it is just what I expected—a madcap adventure which explains itself. It would be ridiculous to interfere seriously in such affairs. Depend upon it, Mr. Wriottesley is somewhere safely stowed away with his lady-love, and will re-appear when the tumult is over."

"But suppose, General, there has been some foul play."

"Why need we suppose anything of the kind? It would be the purest and most uncalled for conjecture."

"You would not think it advisable to communicate with the Spanish authorities?"

"It would be too absurd. I really cannot move in the matter. Besides, consider young Wriottesley's feelings at being hunted down by the Spanish police. Depend upon it, he has his own good reasons for keeping out of the way."

"I don't think, General, that he has any right to frighten us all and disturb the quiet of the garrison."

"We'll punish him for that. Tell his colonel to place him in arrest the moment he returns; of course I shall insist upon his giving a satisfactory account of himself."

The chief personage having thus decided to let Frank's disappearance for the present rest without active inquiry, the question was practically disposed of, and lingered only as the property of the idle gossip-mongers of the place. With them, too, it promised to degenerate into a nine-day's wonder. At first they inveighed a little against the apathy of the authorities; then the first freshness of the rumor faded away, and not even the continued absence of all tidings was able to keep the subject alive. No one now was really uneasy. Frank's personal friends wondered a little, but hoped for the best. The Sproules cared nothing whether our hero was alive or dead. In spite of the general commotion they had remained obstinately dumb, declaring that no word of theirs should help him out of any difficulty into which he might have fallen. Mrs. Sproule never wanted to see him again, and Tony said he wished he had never seen him before. Perhaps the only person actively concerned was Frank's colonel, and he, as commanding officer, was more annoyed at Frank's contempt for military rules in playing truant so long than seriously alarmed at his absence.

So the days slipped by, and with them many of the chances for unraveling the mystery. First, Bellota died suddenly; then came the break-up at Rosia Cottage, followed by Lola's hasty departure for England, and the removal of the Pefiafors from Agua Dulce. Last of all, Tio Mochuelo's evidence was lost. The old man had been taken up so short when he inquired at Montegriffo's for Frank, that he left the garrison abruptly and vowed he would never re-pass the gates. Thus for the moment all clews vanished into thin air. When the time came for reopening the question, it might be difficult to get at the real truth.

Nor could that time be much longer delayed. While they dozed on in calm indifference upon the Rock, hourly expecting to see Frank ride up the streets, and present in himself the most simple solution of the difficulty, Sir Hector had learned through Lola what had actually occurred. He sought without delay the assistance of the English government. A lengthy dispatch issued from the Colonial Office embodying all the details. These, though meager, were circumstantial.

All was as clear now as noonday. Beyond question Mr. Wriottesley had been attacked and shot down. But was he really dead? This must be ascertained as soon as possible; in any case, condign punishment must be meted out to those who had attacked him. The second burst of excitement as to Frank's fate rose rapidly to fever-pitch. Nor was it confined now to irresponsible persons. All the officials, high and low, were equally roused. Lord Montrésor, the Governor, was greatly grieved for Frank. The young fellow had doubtless been indiscreet. To elope with a young lady from the house of her friends was not an action to be defended; nevertheless the offense hardly deserved to be punished with instant death. His Lordship was determined to sift the matter to the very bottom.

A select commission was promptly appointed to take evidence, and examine all persons connected, even by implication, with the affair. Here at once they were checked by flaws in the chain; links were gone, and only by conjecture could the gaps be made good. Captain Sproule was called up; he was a great personal friend. Had he seen Mr. Wriottesley? Had he any idea what was the real reason of the sudden start into Spain? Mrs. Sproule was also interrogated. Both husband and wife repudiated Frank's friendship, and denied that they knew anything of his affairs. They had seen him, certainly, for a short time, and had thought his manner somewhat strange; his mind seemed unsettled, his temper uncertain; probably he was meditating some foolish act. Nothing satisfactory was elicited from the Sproules. Nor could Muldoon throw much light on the matter.

His master had said he was going to Ximena. He often went to Ximena. Why? Muldoon shook his head, as if to disclaim all acquaintance with Frank's secrets. But there were some few people who knew of the visits to the Cortijo de Agua Dulce, and the attractions which drew Frank thither. The venue was thus changed to Spain. Confidential messengers were dispatched to question the Peñaflors. But the whole family had decamped. They were gone, it was said, to Madrid. From the first there had been a hint—originating with Lola herself—that these cousins were more nearly concerned in the recent catastrophe than they would care to avow. Now their rapid evacuation of their old home roused fresh suspicion. It was considered advisable to trace them out. But how? Might not a reclamation be made on the Spanish Cabinet at Madrid for advice and assistance?

From the first Lord Montrésor had been in constant telegraphic correspondence with our Ambassador at the Spanish Court. Through him the support and countenance of the Spanish Government were earnestly invited. It surely could not be tolerated in a Christian country that unoffending passengers should be massacred on the public highways? The attitude of the Spanish Government was one of courteous incredulity. Disasters of the kind were impossible in the realms of Her Most Catholic Majesty. Travelers might meet with a *disgusto*—a mischance; they might be deprived of a little superfluous cash by reckless rogues. In Spain, as elsewhere, they were *hijos de todas modras*—sons of various kinds of mothers,—but to lose their lives! Impossible! The Minister of the Interior quite laughed when, later on, an effort was made to implicate the Peñaflors. They were people of the first distinction, of untold wealth, which was always judiciously expended. They had recently bought a palace in the Wide Street of San Bernardo, and it had become one of the centres of polite society in the Court. Was it probable that such people would be entangled with low intrigues? The only satisfaction our Minister at first obtained was that instructions should be sent to the Civil Governors of Arcos and Ronda to institute proceedings. When the inquiry had been opened in due form, all persons concerned should be summoned to make notarial depositions, and these, duly verified and attested, would be a guide for further action. At the end of some half-dozen years, as the result of these proceedings, by proper channels there would be an authoritative announcement that one Francis Wriottesley, an English subject traveling in Spain for his pleasure, was missing still.

Such dilatory measures, however, did not suit Lord Montrésor's temper; and further representations, more peremptory in

tone, were addressed to the Spanish Government. After some further delay, goaded by the continual nagging of the Ambassador, the Spanish Minister promised to do all that was required. Regiments of foot and horse should be sent to scour the country; the Captain-General of Andaluca should himself head the campaign. As the practical outcome of all this talk, a few patrols of *guardia civiles*, or soldiers of the police, started from Cadiz, and took a pleasant promenade through the mountains, returning within a week or two to report that everything was quiet, and not a robber alive in the whole country-side.

But now, with the tacit consent of the Spanish authorities, the English General instituted a much more vigorous search on his own account. Spies were sent out in all directions. There was no end to them. About the livery-stables in Gibraltar are always to be found half a dozen or more free-lances, ready to take service at a moment's notice with any master, and ride forth into Spain as groom, body-servant or guide. All of these—Pedro Gil, Juan Garcia, Antonio Perez, Manoel this, Felipe that, and Enrique the other—were now enlisted and let loose to roam through the neighborhood. Their activity, as evidenced by the telegrams they sent back daily, was prodigious. They were forever getting on the track; the news was "good," "better," "excellent." Within a few hours the search must be concluded, and the whole mystery cleared up. Had some one been dispatched to spy out the spies, these active agents would have been found taking their ease at various *pasadas*, and living on the fat of the land. Some suspicion of this came home ere long to the English authorities, and an endeavor was made to find more suitable local detectives.

There had been no lack of counselors from the first, who had each in turn proposed an infallible plan of procedure. Now, as the search for news continued unavailing, each wiseacre averred that the result would have been different had their advice been followed. Many of them agreed in one point—they all alike condemned the agents chosen. This was principally because each had some particular friend especially suited for the job. But there was some sense in the objection to those already sent, that they were all natives of the Rock. There are no very close ties between the "Scorpions" and the Andaluca peasants; cousins though they may be by descent, they hate each other cordially. Now, if real Spanish agents had been employed! There was Corbacho, for instance, a noted dealer in contraband, who was continually moving to and fro. Tio Mochuelo, again, the father of all the muleteers; or Patoronro, the gypsy horse-chauiter, who knew every rogue between Cadiz and the Alpujarras—let such men as these be sent out, and within a week

the matter might be considered settled. Perhaps the most prominent person of this class was a certain Simon Lopez, better known as Moscardon, who had been exiled for some time past from Spain on account of his political opinions. He was a Republican, and had been mixed up more than once in unsuccessful plots against the government. Now he made Gibraltar his head-quarters, but the pleasure of his society was not altogether appreciated upon the Rock, and he entered the garrison only from day to day on a permit, which would have been immediately forfeited if he had dared to sleep in the town. Any resting-place on *terra firma* being thus denied him, he led an amphibious life, and by night lodged on board a coal-hulk in the Bay, or on one of the many *saluchas* of which he was part proprietor. Moscardon was, nevertheless, a man of good repute among his fellows, the contrabandistas. They trusted him thoroughly, saying his word was as good as his bond. It was he who bought the tobacco, bribed the Spanish revenue-officers, accompanied the laden boats to the point on the Spanish coast where the landing was to be effected. In this way thousands of dollars passed through his hands, and he never wronged a soul. His father before him had been a contrabandista, and his brothers were now the same. Both by family tradition and his own straightforward dealing he had gained much influence among his friends. Moscardon could be relied upon to pick up any quantity of intelligence were he only free to visit Spain.

They sent for him, therefore, and asked him whether he was disposed to assist. Yes, if they secured him a safe-conduct from Madrid. Had he any notion who were the probable culprits? No; it was long since he had traveled by Ximena to Ronda, and he could not speak from his own knowledge. But rumor had it that many smugglers had lately fallen into evil ways; trade, you see, was so bad just now (he spoke of his business as might any tradesman who followed an honorable calling) that some may have found it hard to provide food for their little ones. "To steal, in fact?" they asked Moscardon. "Well, to borrow on their own security." "Would such be likely to do injury to those they robbed?" "Never! That is to say, not intentionally. If resistance was offered, some accident might happen; probably such had been the case now. The gentleman had been wounded—"

"Why not killed?" asked Lord Montrésor, quickly.

"He would be worth too much, your most excellent highness. They are nursing him, no doubt, and by and by will make proposals for a ransom. Such things have happened before."

Moscardon seemed so thoroughly master of the situation, that he was intrusted with full powers. There was much method in

his manner of setting to work. Of course he could not move until his safe-conduct arrived; and then, when it was put into his hands, he found serious discrepancies in the *signalement* of his person, and said he was described by wrong Christian names. These mistakes must be rectified before he commenced operations. It was all very well to protest about delay, but it was a question of personal security; and besides, if he were arrested the moment he set foot on Spanish territory, there would be much greater delay. But while the safe-conduct was returned to Madrid for correction, Moscardon was not idle. He spent the time in gathering up information. Frank's appearance was described to him, and that of his horses. Especially was he particular to inquire what brands the latter bore. The Spanish breeder's monogram invariably appears upon the hind-quarters, and though disfiguring, the practice is not without its uses. Taraxicum, they told him, showed the letters J. M., Macho, a V., surmounted with a crown.

One fine morning, with two trusty companions, he sallied forth. His point was the Pozo de Salomon; he meant to begin his researches from the very spot on which the outrage was said to have occurred. But in the pass he met no single soul. Here in the grim loneliness were only ragged rocks and withered cork-trees, and none to answer him a word. Thence in circles he drew the country round, asking here for this friend, there for that, and putting to each a series of cautious questions previously prepared. Were there any *rateros* afoot? Was the Sierra quiet? Had they noticed a gang of horsemen passing that way, strangers or others, seeking to avoid inquiry?

"No; not of late. Some weeks back, Jesualdo Gracias had met a party of six hurrying down from Solomon's Well."

"Mounted?"

"Yes; well mounted; but one of their number had been hurt, and was lying across the saddle."

"Which way went they?"

"By El Bosque towards Bornos."

Moscardon hastily followed up this clew. At another village, Benimahoma, the cavalcade had been also seen, pressing towards Alcalá.

"And the horses—was one a tall yellow horse—*buen caballo?*"

"Clearly; and it carried the man that was hurt."

"Victoria!" cried Moscardon, riding on at once to Alcalá.

Here at the barracks of the *guardia civil* he made inquiries, and was told that a party of six answering the description had been seen about dawn one morning near the Molinos de Patriste. Thither went Moscardon, and found that there had been six such men, strangers, in the place, and one had inquired

where they could get two horses shod. Whither had they gone next? Some said towards the Sierra, others towards the *Gampiña*—the plains of Xerez. Moscardon tried the mountains first, but speedily lost all clew. Next he spent several days searching the cultivated districts round Medina Sidonia at Arcos, also quite without success. Then he pushed on to Xeres, of which place he was a native, meaning to continue his inquiries there, and at the same time, while away a few hours with old friends and towns-folk, from whom he had long been parted.

At Xeres no one had heard of the mysterious occurrence which was the subject of Moscardon's search, nor had any suspicious party of six strangers been seen in the town. Moscardon, beginning to despair, was about to leave the town, when as a last chance, he went the round of the stables at the several inns, and at one of the last, the *Posada de los Tres Reyes*, he came unexpectedly across Taraxicum, or his own brother.

Elated at this discovery, he resolved to watch the stable and see who owned the horse. Shortly afterwards a man whom he did not recognize—large and portly, with smooth cheeks and oily hair, not a native of Xeres, evidently, for Moscardon knew them all by sight—came down the street and entered the stable. Moscardon followed. The stranger was preparing to give Taraxicum a feed.

"Friend," said Moscardon abruptly, "I like your horse's looks."

"I can't say I like yours," was the surly reply.

"Where did you get him?" went on Moscardon without taking offense.

"Ask him. Perhaps he'll tell you, for I shan't."

"Will you sell him?"

"Yes; and his halter, which will do for you."

"*Hombre!* You are a stranger here, and perhaps have not heard of me. But the neighbors know me, and will take my part against any cut-purse brigand that seeks to quarrel. *Es-ids?* Do you understand?"

"If all Xeres town and province were behind your back, I'd call you a meddling, gossiping scoundrel."

"Not when you know the business that brought me hither. Shall I tell you? I came in search of this same horse you stole—"

"Liar! It was my father's before me."

"From the English officer you waylaid and killed."

And with this point-blank shot Moscardon turned to leave the stable.

"Come back! Come back!" cried the stranger.

"Yes, when I have called the *pareja*,—the brace of *civiles* who wait without to haul you off to prison."

"My temper is hasty, señor *mío*. Forgive me. You must take me as you find me. He who seeks a mule without a blemish will have to go on foot."

"Aha! and the bravest bull is sometimes tamed when he gets into fields he does not know."

"For what purpose are you really here?"

"I came to meet you," replied Moscardon, promptly.

"*Tontería!* I passed this way only by chance. No one knew I was coming."

"I did," stoutly maintained Moscardon, "and why you have come. I have been on the lookout for you for some days."

"Curious!" said the stranger somewhat taken aback. "How came you by your information?"

"One of your own band."

"That *malvado* Pepe Picarillo has played us false again! I told the captain he was not to be trusted."

"He has done no harm. I am here to arrange with you as you please. I will not be hard on you. Between tailors there is no extra charge for stitching. Tell me only what you want."

"We want ten thousand dollars."

"It is a large sum."

"They are rich, these English, and his friends must sell all they have, even to the family plate."

"When and how is it to be paid?"

"Every hour is of consequence. There are some amongst us who would put an end to him at once, sooner than risk having the authorities track us down. His life is hardly worth an hour's purchase."

"Not if the ransom is promised?"

"That may save him; but not if it is long delayed. They are afraid, miserable curs, of their own skins, and they would put him out of the way at once, then escape to the other end of Spain. The captain dispatched me to Cadiz, where I was to see the consul—after promise of safe-conduct—and treat with the gentleman's friends."

"How are we to know that you have authority to negotiate for the others?"

"Here are letters from the gentleman himself."

"Is he well?"

"Fairly well. The wound has healed, but he is weak and anxious."

"Let him be anxious no more. The affair is as good as arranged. I promise the money shall be paid. Give me the letters."

"Not so fast. I would not doubt your promise myself, but my comrades may not be so easily persuaded."

"I am commissioned by the English Government to arrange the affair. If you bind yourself to deliver him over alive, a ransom of ten thousand dollars shall be paid. Do you doubt me still? Come to the *correo*; I will telegraph to the Governor of the Rock, and when you see his answer will you be satisfied?"

"*Es claro!* Of course; but even then there will be much to settle. We must have the cash in gold, made up in bags that we can carry round our waists. We must have a promise that the *civiles* will not touch us when we come to fetch it; and the money must be paid over before the gentleman is released."

"They will hardly agree to that."

"Can they not trust us? We are *caballeros*, gentlemen, and not low thieves."

"Well, well; it is for you to make the terms. To anything in reason they will not, I think, object."

"And the money?"

"The sum is large."

"The English coffers are deep."

"And how are we to be sure that he will be given up alive?"

"One of us will remain in your hands till the affair is concluded. I will myself, or the captain will. When may I expect you with money?"

"When I get it."

"There is no time to spare."

"It may be that they will not trust me over yonder with so large a sum. I am not well looked on by the English Government. Perhaps they will prefer to send it by an agent of their own."

"In that case let us fix on some signal by which we shall know. We will meet him, say, at the hotel of the Crown in Cadiz. Let him have a white handkerchief worn like a turban around his hat, and carry a photograph in his hand."

"So be it! In two days from now I or another will meet you at Cadiz. Do you without delay go back and take the gentleman under your wing. They will hardly hurt him now?"

"I know not. His neck, I think, is still in the noose."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FOUND.

A RICH harvest of open-mouthed abuse had been Pepe's portion in return for the cowardly shot which had laid Frank Wriottesley low. The other brigands were indignant, not because Pepe had taken a mean advantage, but because Frank's

death would have robbed them of all chance of making money by his detention. No ransom would be paid for a dead man; Frank could only be of value so long as he was kept alive. The captain's first care, therefore, as he threw himself anxiously from his horse, was too see whether Frank still breathed, and, as he did so, a glance gave Pepe plainly to understand that one mortal wound would speedily be repaid by another. But a short examination showed that Frank, though insensible, was not actually killed, and Pepe, for the present, escaped the fate—something too good for him perhaps—of being murdered by his fellows.

As at the time of the catastrophe the pursuers from Agua Dulce were close at hand, a couple of the brigands were selected to restore Lola to her own people, while the rest prepared, in all haste, to carry Frank away. They made his body fast across the saddle, and sought some more retired spot in the mountain-side to look to his hurts, and patch him up sufficiently to bear the journey to the Ermita, where for the present they meant to keep him interned. With some rough surgical knowledge, El Capitano applied bandages and stopped the bleeding. There was brandy in Frank's flask, and a strong dose of this restored him to consciousness.

"Where am I?" he asked, surprised to find himself extended upon the grass, and surrounded by strangely dark and forbidding faces.

"With friends," replied the captain; "are you strong enough to travel?"

"Where to?"

"To a place of safety, where you will be tended, and, I hope, restored to health."

"Health! what has happened then? Ah, Heaven be merciful! I remember all. Tell me, for God's sake, tell me," cried Frank, raising himself upon one arm, "where is the señorita? Is she unhurt?"

"The señorita who was with you but just now?"

"Yes, yes!"

"See, down in the valley. Here are glasses, *jemellos*, which I have used myself in the opera house at Seville. Look, if you have the strength. There is a band of horsemen—no? And one on a litter. Do you recognize the party?" Frank plainly made out Lucas Peñafior riding at the head of a procession of horses and mules. On one of the latter the figure of a female, seemingly insensible, was borne.

It was Lola.

With a groan Frank fell back upon the grass and again fainted.

The next few hours seemed to him interminable. He was passing through a long agonizing dream, yet in a state of acute consciousness, enduring keen physical pain, and perfectly alive to all that passed around. They were traveling as speedily as was consistent with his condition. Every now and then the chief, who led, turned to ask him whether his strength was failing. They had but a few hours of it before them he said; at the place to which they were bound the English gentleman would find rest and every comfort. Frank managed to ask their destination, but to this he got no reply; upon which he remarked, that as they were near Ubriquez, he wished they would leave him there. His knowledge of the neighborhood seemed so good that they blindfolded him.

Still they rode on, and Frank could only trust his ears to tell him of his whereabouts. He heard cattle-bells once, then dogs barking close by and soon afterwards they took the handkerchief from his eyes.

"Say good-day to all whom we may meet," whispered the chief, as they passed across a ravine and came to a good hard road. Following this, they reached a town—Bornos, thought Frank—which they avoided by making a detour. Soon afterwards they left the high road, and took a path through a wood. Emerging from this, and commencing to climb a steep ascent, Frank was again blindfolded.

Presently the whole party halted, in obedience to the command of the chief. They had evidently arrived at a house, for a loud hammering on a heavy door followed, accompanied by a summons to those within to come and unbolt. Next a countersign was interchanged, and then without more ado the whole party entered a paved court-yard. Two men, with more gentleness than might have been expected, lifted Frank from his horse, and carrying him up several flights of steps, and through several low doors, beneath which they had to stoop, laid him at length on some rugs on the floor. Then he fainted again.

When he regained consciousness, he found that his eyes were uncovered, that he was in a small, bare, whitewashed room, while a tall man—the captain of the band—was stooping over him examining his wounds. "Does it hurt you to cough?" he asked Frank. No; it did not; nor did any hemorrhage follow the effort.

What had become of the bullet? It had entered at the centre of the chest: was it still in his body? There was no sign whatever that it had passed through his back.

The captain was puzzled. But he did his best for the patient. Josefa under his instructions made a copious infusion of pounded rosemary, which was applied and renewed every two hours as a

poultice or cataplasm—so he called it,—upon the gaping wound. Then they stripped him and laid him within the clean sheets of a truckle-bed. Food was brought, part of a fried kid, reeking with oil and garlic, and a great mess of beans, of which Frank, though faint from want of food, could eat but little. He swallowed gratefully, however, a long gulp of *agras*, a drink made of the juice of the unripe grape, and turning over on his side, managed in spite of mental anguish and keen physical pain to fall into a fitful sleep.

But when he woke he was in a burning fever. His brain was whirling; he was imprisoned in a dark and noisome den. He was in darkness; yet not alone. Squalid shapes mocked and gibbered at him, waving to and fro in weird cadence their grisly arms, while strange unearthly sounds smote him with a terrible dread. The weight of a leaden world sat full upon his chest; he could not breathe, nor move, nor speak. Half a second more of such an agony as this and he must go raving mad. By a superhuman effort a fierce yell of affright burst from him, and in this, the climax of his delirium, his senses left him and he remembered no more.

For several weeks Frank's life hung in the balance. The chief, or the padre cura, who stood next him in authority, watched alternately by his bedside, tending him, with as anxious solicitude as if they were the fondest of parents and he an only child. It would have been in truth a grievous disappointment to them had Frank succumbed. If this, their first great *coup*, had failed, there was little hope of a second as good. Besides, until the question was settled, they were debarred from their daily avocations. They could not issue forth to steal as heretofore, because it might draw suspicion on them, and lead to the loss of the rich prey they had already secured. Of what avail was it to capture this Englishman if he was to remain ill upon their hands for months, and during them they be forced to forego their regular trade? In the minds of one or two of the band a black thought had already arisen, that the simplest solution of the difficulty would be to put an end to Frank at once. Having thus washed their hands of the affair, they might make a fresh attempt, or at least resume their simple operations as gentlemen of the road.

It may be supposed that while they were thus torn by doubts and divided counsels, no small measure of opprobrium fell upon Pepe Picarillo. But for his indiscretion, matters might have been so comfortably arranged. Frank would have been merely intercepted in his flight, captured, and temporarily detained. The ransom, promptly demanded, would have been as promptly paid. Long ere this each man among them would have found

himself in affluence with his share of the spoil. So much ill-will followed Pepe, that he went in terror of his life. He felt continually in jeopardy. As Frank improved or grew worse, so Pepe seemed to postpone or approach his own end. More than once he tried to make off, caring little that his mother, if left behind, would probably be sacrificed instead. But the captain suspected Pepe, and watched him closely. If the fellow were allowed to go free, his first act would doubtless be to bring down upon them the myrmidons of the law. So Pepe was once more a prisoner, a very dejected and disappointed prisoner, having now little hope of escape. At the first attempt, if unsuccessful, he might expect to be ruthlessly killed; and not less inevitably if Frank died might he expect to share the same fate.

But now came a turn in our hero's long illness. The captain had come to notice that Frank lay always on one side or the other; if by chance in his writhing he rolled over on to his back, an excruciating excess of pain invariably followed, to which there was no relief till he resumed his old position on his side. This led to a renewed examination of Frank's back.

Just under the left shoulder-blade was a large lump, so hard and yet so tender to the touch, that the captain guessed almost intuitively that it must hold the missing bullet. Yet was it possible that this lump of lead could have traveled round from the right of the chest where it had entered to the left of the wounded man's back? Without wasting time in further conjecture he sent for a veterinary surgeon's fleam, and with it made a deep incision in the flesh.

Almost immediately the bullet rolled down upon the floor. Sensible relief to the patient followed, the fever and the inflammation abated, and Frank, though he still continued weak and unable to move, regained his consciousness so far as to realize his position, and inquire feebly how he came to be in so miserable a plight. At first he had no very distinct recollection of the events which had preceded his illness, nor when the conviction dawned upon him that he had been badly wounded could he quite comprehend why he should be lying in this squalid hole. The place was not much like a sick-chamber; there was little air, less light; neither noiseless nurses to smooth his pillow and anticipate his lightest wish, nor grave and learned doctors to advise at every turn. Josefa, grown more and more like an old witch, grumbling at every footstep, came now and again with fresh dressing for his wound, or brought a basin of rice-broth or watery *caldo* filled with crumbs of bread. He was too feeble to wonder why this old beldame of all others should be nursing him; it was part of the strange mystery that he should find himself here at all, prostrate, and, as it were, but just returned from the brink of the tomb.

By and by came El Capitano, not a little elated at Frank's visible improvement.

"Well, señor, *mio*, there are more days and more dumplings in store for you yet, I hope. You will soon be as strong as a horse. Food is all you require now. Meat, wine and raw garlic soon make the weakest stripling jump."

"Have I been long like this?"

"Many weeks, or you would not be better now. It's time, not ointment, cures the sick."

"I'm hardly cured yet, I fear."

"You're like the Spaniard, señor, who wanted to be better before he was well."

"When shall I be able to move?"

"Move! Whither?"

"Away—back to my own people on the Rock. You have been kind to a poor unfortunate devil, and as far as lies in my power you shall have your reward. But I do not wish to trespass longer on your hospitality."

Frank had quite forgotten, if indeed he had ever understood, the character of his hosts; and certainly no suspicion came to him from the captain's reply.

"*Nada!* It is for you to command in this house. It belongs to you."

"How far are we from Gibraltar?"

"*Lejos!*" replied the captain vaguely. "Far—yes, far. But you are still weak, señor *mio*; you must not talk too much."

He feared that a relapse might follow too abrupt a revelation of the true state of affairs.

Nor indeed, as the days passed, could our hero win any response to his repeated inquiries. There was something suspicious in this continued silence. He would have sounded Josefa, but somehow he was never left alone with her; and this in itself increased his doubts.

But one day when he had pressed harder than usual for an answer, the captain replied:

"Go, señor Ingles; you can go when you please, provided only that you feel strong enough to travel and will pay for the 'noise of the house'."

This *ruido de casa* is the Spanish phrase for an hotel-bill.

"That will I pay right gladly."

"Yes; that is well. But we have been put to some expense, and must ask a good round sum—"

"You deserve to be well paid for your trouble."

"Ten thousand dollars, is that too much to ask?"

"Ten thou—" began Frank, then bursting into a laugh he said, "this is a dear hotel!"

"We have saved your life twice over. But for us the lady's friends—you know to whom I refer—would have been your death. Since then we have cured you from a long and dangerous illness."

"You cannot surely be in earnest?"

"By the whole of the hairs of the sainted apostles I am. The times are hard, and wealth must be got together how we can."

"Those who would grow rich in one twelve-month sometimes get hanged about June."

"You will not miss the money: You have much, and will doubtless have more. God fills the granaries of those who have never lacked bread."

"You mistake. I also am poor."

"An Englishman and poor! But you have rich friends; your family-house will pay gladly to see you once again."

"If the money is not forthcoming—what then?"

"Here you must remain."

"Here, in this house?"

"Or under it. Do you understand?"

If Frank, still upon the border-land of unconsciousness, had some difficulty in understanding the predicament in which he found himself, as the days passed and he advanced rapidly towards convalescence, the veil dropped from his eyes. He was soon strong enough to leave his bed; and then the captain conducted him down-stairs to the general living-room or kitchen, where the rest of the brigands were assembled. Here at once Frank spied Pepe scowling at him from a corner.

"You here!"

"There is no debt that is not some day paid in full, Señor *Paco*; the account between us will soon be squared."

As he spoke, his eyes glared, and Frank, weak still and helpless, looked round to the others in some alarm.

"He is really glad to see you so near recovery," said the captain.

"While you were ill, he burned candles night and day to all his saints."

These allusions were not very intelligible to Frank, and he looked from the captain to the padre cura, and then to Pepe in surprise.

"No matter," said the chief, "let us to business. We have brought you here, señor *mío*, to consider the terms of your release. You are anxious to return to your friends. We desire nothing better ourselves. It rests only for you to fix the day of your departure."

"On the conditions named?"

"Yes; on payment of ten thousand hard dollars in silver *pesos* or golden *Isabels*, we care not which."

"How can I obtain such a sum?"

"Here are pens and paper; write to your bankers on the Rock an order for the whole amount. State also that the cash must be left under the second arch of the aqueduct by Algeciras, and that you will not be given up unless we are allowed to remove it without observation or interference."

"The terms are preposterous. In the first place, no banker on the Rock or elsewhere would honor my draft for such a sum. I am nearly penniless."

"Then you must apply to your friends."

"I have none."

"This is mere waste of words," broke in Pepe.

"*Sí, sí,*" cried two of the others; "and we have already wasted weeks of time."

"Let the money be forthcoming without more delay, or the gentleman may enter the chapel* and say his prayers."

These three malcontents joined forces, and looked for the moment very menacing.

"Stand back, pigs!" shouted the captain, drawing his big Albacete knife from his sash. "Whoever lays a finger on the gentleman will have first to do with me."

A *melle* seemed imminent, when suddenly Josefa rushed in crying:

"The soldiers! the soldiers! A party of *carabineros* are coming up the cañon."

"Quick!" said the captain, promptly. "Padre Cura, and you, Gabarron, take the gentleman up-stairs. Lie close. The danger will soon pass."

Frank was hurried back to his bedroom, and thence towards a loft which was approached only by a ladder. The speed they had used was too much for his strength, and he was unable to climb the rungs. So Padre Cura lifted him on to the back of the other brigand, who carried him up to the loft. The place was low and dark; they had almost to crawl along, stooping to avoid the joists of the roof.

"What does this mean?" asked Frank.

"They have come to search the house."

"For me?"

"No; for contraband. They are revenue officers. But had they seen you, our game would have been spoiled."

This alarm did not pass until after night-fall, nor was it the only one. For now the excitement at Gibraltar had commenced, and rumors soon reached the Ermita that active search for the missing English officer had been set on foot. One or other of

* To be on *capilla* is the Spanish phrase for the condemned cell.

the brigands was sent out daily to gather information, returning always with fresh details. Benitez was on their track; the *civiles* at Seville were under orders to beat the Sierras: any day a descent upon the Ermita by an armed force might be expected.

As these reports took more and more the color of probability, the risk of being detected with Frank in their possession gained strength, and with it the animosity of many of the brigands against their captive increased. Now indeed the threats against his life were frequently repeated. Nor did these villains at all care whether it was in Frank's presence that they discussed the advisability of putting him to death. Again and again the captain, who still performed the *rôle* of protector and friend, warned him that one of these days it would be impossible to stem the violence of the others, and that then the victim must be left to his fate. And all for such a pitiful sum! What were a few thousand dollars in exchange for life and freedom? Surely the gentleman could of himself or through the efforts of his friends, raise more than this for an affair of such pressing need?

Frank had never from the first doubted that an application to his uncle would fail of immediate effect. But he hesitated to ask, hoping that he might gain his release by other means. Now, when the affair assumed its worst complexion, he sat down to tell the story, only sorry now that he had so long delayed. The payment might be made readily enough perhaps, but not necessarily in time to save his life. His letter to Sir Hector was couched in somewhat formal terms; he referred in no way to what had passed between them, but stated merely that he was in the hands of Spanish brigands, and unless speedily ransomed would probably die the death. At the same time he wrote to his colonel, explaining his long absence, and giving full particulars of his present jeopardy. Both letters were left unsealed. The captain demanded to be allowed to peruse them, if he required, as a substantial proof of Frank's good faith.

It was as the bearer of these missives that Padre Cura had been dispatched and had met Moscardon at Xeres as already described. What followed must be briefly passed over. While the brigand returned to his fellows to give assurances that the ransom would soon be paid, Moscardon hastened in person to Gibraltar, and laid the letters, with the news of Frank's danger, before Lord Montrésor. The Governor did not hesitate as to the next step. Instructions were forthwith issued to the commissariat chest to disburse the necessary sum in gold, and this, packed in a small valise, was put under the escort of a reliable officer, who started forthwith for Cadiz. Moscardon accompanied him. They traveled in a government steam-tug, and they were instructed to keep their mission secret. On landing they

proceeded to the hotel indicated, and next morning, as arranged, they met the padre cura. Meanwhile at the Ermita the prospect of speedy payment diminished the imminence of Frank's danger, but so long as he was in the hands of the brigands he could not feel safe. He was forever in a state of feverish uncertainty, and his heart bounded with vague joy when the captain entered his room one evening about dusk and bade him prepare for a journey.

"Am I to be released?"

"That will depend. Do not ask questions. *Corre prisa—*time presses."

They blindfolded him and set him on horseback behind another man. As if to insure still further that he should not attempt to escape, they fastened his legs by a rope passing beneath the horse's girths. In this unpleasant fashion they traveled all night; at first, as it seemed, down a steep mountain track—they were descending the Sierra—then along a good hard and level road, in civilized districts evidently, and in a flat country. Towards dawn their speed increased, but it was already daylight when Frank, dismounted and unbandaged, found himself in a room not unlike the one he had occupied at the Ermita, bare, but with barred windows, giving a glimpse of other houses of considerable size.

He was in the heart of a large town—probably Cadiz. Strange predicament!—a prisoner still, but not now in a remote mountain pass, where his captors might count upon escaping suspicion, but in the centre of busy life, with English folk not far off, and the whole machinery of the Spanish law within reach, if he could but make his appeal for assistance heard.

The captain seemed to guess that such thoughts would be uppermost in his mind, for at once he gave Frank to understand that the slightest attempt to betray his position would be followed by instant death.

"Things go well. It may be that to-morrow you will be free. But only if we are satisfied in our demands."

"Why did you bring me here to Cadiz?"

"How know you that you are in Cadiz?"

"I guess as much. There is no other town of this size to be reached across the plains, and I seem already to sniff the air of the sea."

"Cadiz or no Cadiz, you are a prisoner still. I brought you here because affairs drew me, and I feared that if you were left alone you might fare badly with those rogues. But now rest. There is food, a bed, all that you can require. Only be still. Outside stands Gabarron, and he is armed. Beware!"

Wearied with his ride, Frank threw himself upon the bed, and,

in spite of his anxiety, was soon in a sound sleep. When he awoke, he saw the captain and two others at a table intent upon an important task. They were counting the coins in several large piles of gold.

Frank sprang to his feet.

"This money—you have received it for my release?"

"*Sí, señor. Noventa uno, noventa dos;*" and the captain continued his counting.

"Then why not release me?"

"There may be an error in the tally. The coins may some of them be false. Do not, kind sir, interrupt us further."

But when the task of counting out the two thousand five-dollar pieces was brought to an end, Frank's freedom seemed no nearer at hand. Did they mean to have their cake and eat it? Would they pocket the ransom and slaughter him as well? A prey to miserable forebodings, Frank suffered more in the next few hours, when deliverance seemed within his grasp, than at any previous period in his captivity.

Towards evening they gave him food, and that dispatched, bade him lie down and rest.

"In a few hours more you will be with your friends," said the captain.

It was about midnight when they roused him again. He was told to dress, and they led him out of the house. He was not blindfolded now, and saw that he was in an empty street. Five of the brigands accompanied him. They all walked rapidly forward, till they came to a railway arch.

"Here," said the captain, "we leave you. Go in God's keeping. The affair is well concluded. Take the first turning to the left, and keep straight on till you meet a *sereno* (watchman). He will direct you to the Hotel of the Crown, where your friends await you. *Adios! Adios!* till we meet again."

"A long time hence, I trust," laughed Frank, elated at the prospect of liberation. "But *adios*; you will, I hope, meet with your deserts."

Then he turned down the street indicated, and walked on till the summons "*Quien vive*" of the watchman brought him to halt.

"Friend, can you direct me to the Hotel of the Crown?"

"I can, sir, and will. You had better hasten thither. This is a bad place to loiter in. Evil people are about, and you might chance to be robbed or worse."

All this he said with a meaning smile, and Frank had little doubt that he was also an accomplice. But he gave him a dollar for his trouble, and within half an hour had shaken hands with the man who brought the ransom, and then he slept, for the first time in months, soundly and well.

Next day in the steam-tug the whole party returned to Gibraltar.

One word more before we leave the brigands and their ill-gotten wealth.

Two days later, just as evening fell, a small party of *guardia civiles* approached the small stone bridge which, at Asnar, spans the Majazeite, a sluggish tributary of the river Guadalete. They took post in a methodical way right across the road, one of their number only being thrown forward some few hundred yards to act as vidette.

Presently he ran back to give the signal: "They are coming;" and the soldiers stood to their arms.

Next appeared El Capitano, who rode at the head of his band, and after him five others. They were jogging slowly along, unconscious of danger, their horses slightly jaded, and they themselves fatigued with their long journey and the loads they carried. Two thousand golden coins are not quite a feather-weight.

Suddenly the brigands caught sight of the soldiers drawn up in line, and with evidently hostile intentions.

"*Quien vive!*" challenged the corporal who commanded the Civil Guards.

For reply the brigands fired a volley, and one soldier fell dead.

Immediately the Guards fired and closed in with revolvers and swords. Three of the brigands were shot dead, two others, who had been wounded, were soon dispatched, while the sixth, who, at the first alarm, had turned to gallop for his life, was soon overtaken and killed.

The officers of the law thus remained masters of the field. A special report of the action was forwarded to Arcos, with the corpses of the dead brigands for identification and interment.

Strange to say, not one farthing was found upon their persons—so the guards averred. They had made a thorough search; but the money paid for the ransom had altogether disappeared.

What had become of it?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AT GRIMSWYCH.

FRANK was received on the Rock with open arms. His progress up Waterport Street was like a triumphal procession. His friends crowded round with loud congratulations, and numbers of people, of all classes and nationalities, came forward to greet him and shake him by the hand.

Then one of the General's aides-de-camp appeared upon the scene, and carried him to the Governor's palace, where he was ushered at once into the presence of Lord Montrésor himself.

His Lordship made him sit down and tell his story from beginning to end.

"I am not going to scold you, Mr. Wriottesley. You have probably had punishment enough. You are young, and you have been foolish. But happily all has ended well."

"Not quite, my Lord, I fear. I cannot rest till I have heard what has become of Miss Bellota."

"The partner of your flight?"

"My future wife, my Lord."

"She was some relation of a person they called the Viscount, I think?" and Lord Montrésor looked at Frank curiously, as if wondering at his infatuation.

"Yes."

"This Bellota is dead. He died suddenly, I find—about a month ago."

"And Lola?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"None of the family remain here. Some of them, we learn from our inquiries, have established themselves at Madrid, and the young lady in whom you are interested has disappeared."

"Gone! Great Heavens!"

"She has gone, it is supposed, to friends in England."

"Ah" said Frank with a sigh of relief.

"And now, Mr. Wriottesley," went on his lordship, "what are your plans? There are one or two points which must be settled without delay. Your ransom, as you are aware, has been paid—"

"Yes, my Lord, I know. But how, I cannot for the life of me comprehend. The sum is more—"

"Than you are worth perhaps," said Lord Montrésor, laughing good-naturedly. "I advanced the money from the public chest. I knew it would be repaid; if not by the Spanish government, on which I shall insist, I presume that you and your friends will make the sum good."

"My uncle, Sir Hector Harrowby, would at one time have paid more than this to save my life. Now—"

"You have not been on good terms with him of late? Pardon the question, but I may as well tell you that I have heard from him, and that you seem to stand high in his affections. He has been nearly heart-broken—"

"Have you communicated with him yet, my Lord?"

"I had intended to telegraph, but thought it more prudent to wait till you had actually re-appeared."

"May I ask a favor? Pray send no such message. Let me

go home at once. I should wish to announce my deliverance in person, my Lord."

"It is what I would have myself suggested. But your uncle is old. Do not be abrupt. You are a hasty young gentleman, and a brusque *début* might lead to serious harm."

"Joy seldom kills, my Lord."

"How will you travel?"

"Overland."

"Haven't you had enough of Spain? Better than that. There is the 'Royal Monarch' now in the Bay. She is going to England to be paid off. Captain Sotheby will give you a passage. Good-bye, Mr. Wriottesley. Shall you rejoin your regiment here?"

"I cannot tell what will happen to me yet, my Lord. But in any case I shall some day return to Gibraltar. There are scenes and people here so closely bound up with my life, that I shall not be able to resist the longing to re-visit Spain."

Within a week of his release Frank landed in England, and this time made all haste to Grimswych. As he alighted at the well-known station, and walked rapidly up to the Park, he could hardly believe that seven short days before he had been a prisoner in a miserable den among the Spanish mountains, and in terror of his life. What a change! From the Ermita, Cadiz, Gibraltar, to his native land; from captivity, to absolute freedom; from the bright skies and burning southern sun, to the dull fog of a November evening in England. The raw air struck coldly upon his face, and for the moment Frank was depressed. How would his uncle receive him?

A strange servant answered the door-bell. What had become of Butterfield? Frank augured well from the butler's absence.

"Sir Hector, sir, sees no one at this hour," said the man. "If it is on business that you wish to speak to him, he is always in the justice-room every morning at eleven. But to private callers he is never at home."

"He will be at home, I think, to me. Is he alone in the house?"

"Well, sir, not exactly." The servant hesitated; was he right in holding this long talk with a stranger? "There are friends staying here, at least a young lady—Miss Fairfax."

"Fairfax!" cried Frank. "A visitor?"

"Well, sir, she has been here some weeks now, and I did hear she was to make a long stay."

"Go in, my friend," said Frank, hurriedly, his heart beating wildly with vague hopes. This Miss Fairfax—who was she? Who could she be? "Go in, my friend, and say a gentleman from Gibraltar has brought important news for Sir Hector. This will gain you absolution for admitting me to the house."

The servant went away more re-assured. It was well known to them all that some mysterious misfortune had overtaken their master's nephew out in Spain, and the mere mention of Gibraltar gave Frank importance in the butler's eyes.

"Will you please walk this way—to the left"—a good joke, telling Frank his way about the house! "Sir Hector is in his study. He will see you immediately."

The place was but dimly lighted. At a small table, on which stood a screened lamp, sat a female figure. She had just laid down a book from which she had been reading aloud. Sir Hector, who was in an arm-chair before the fire, rose and was about to greet the visitor with courteous eagerness.

"You have something of importance, sir, to tell me?"

"Uncle! Lola!"

There was no need to ask the news.

In the early spring Lola and Frank were married from Fairfax Manor. After a short interval they took up their residence with Sir Hector Harrowby. Frank must retire from the army, his uncle said; there should be no more separation. For the future his heir must remain at Grimswych and take his proper place in the county. Frank was in truth a great acquisition to the neighborhood; no one played a more active part in local affairs, was more regular in his appearance at quarter sessions, more devoted to field sports. As the mistress of a large country house Mrs. Wriottesley was in every respect a success. The Park was soon transformed from the hermitage of a solitary recluse to one of the pleasantest centres of society in the whole kingdom. Despite the grave duties she had now assumed, Lola regained all her old light-heartedness: she could laugh, and tease *Paco*, mimic any solemn bore, sing snatches of Spanish song, or chatter in the language of her childhood with her cousin Miguel when he came down from London to see them.

To pay the debt of gratitude to him had indeed been with Frank and Lola a first care. The sudden loss of the fortune they had so unexpectedly inherited had fallen with cruel but not undeserved severity upon the Peñafors; happily for them Don Mariano's granddaughter was no Shylock, requiring the uttermost farthing of all of hers they had spent. But they returned to Agua Dulce crushed and dispirited, having but little heart to resume the life of toil from which they thought to have been finally raised. Now Lola heaped coals of fire upon them. A sufficient allowance was made to all but to Miguel, as he deserved something more.

The Tio Mochuelo was not forgotten. There is not now a more thriving *arriero* in southern Spain, and he owes his fortunes in no small degree to the ten handsome Catalonian mules which were presented to him by his English friends.

Major Honeybun you may be sure is always welcome at Grimswych Park.

As for Captain and Mrs. Sproule, they still prosper in their own peculiar fashion. He hopes for promotion soon, and will then retire to breed horses and race them. His wife would like to take a small cottage somewhere near her dear friends the Wriottesleys, of whom she frequently speaks in terms of unmeasured affection.

There would be little left for dear old Lady Georgina to live for if she could satisfactorily dispose of one vital question—the particular form of religious belief in which Frank and Lola's children are to be brought up. Lady Marion and Lady Henriette vex each other's souls as to the want of judgment each displays in petting and spoiling the girl that bears her name. Sir Hector is equally infatuated about a baby boy who, when his father enters the House and wins a baronetcy is to take the name of Harrowby and preserve the memory of a good old stock from extinction.

Frank and Lola are of course absolutely happy. Now and again he yearns to wander abroad; and Lola too would gladly re-visit old scenes, full of sad associations, half effaced already by a rowd of new joys. Some day, when Spain is more settled, Mr. and Mrs. Wriottesley talk of providing themselves with a yacht so that Lola may return in state to the place of her birth.

THE END.



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